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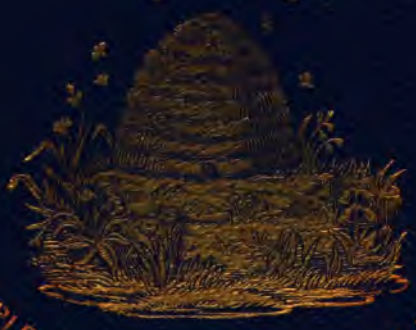

PLENTY TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

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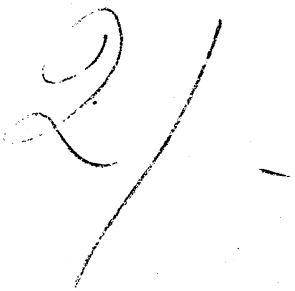

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WORK

OR

PLENTY TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT.

BY

Mrs. MARGARET MARIA BREWSTER Gordon

FIFTEENTH THOUSAND.

EDINBURGH: THOMAS CONSTABLE & CO.

HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO., LONDON.

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THE words of preface which this homely little volume requires are but few. With no pretensions to originality, it professes merely to be a brief Manual of every-day hints to those who, commencing "Life in Earnest," and fully instructed in its principles, may yet feel their need of a few practical and plain-spoken words about the details of their work—words often left unspoken, because apparently so obvious. The Author is not without the hope, that her little work may prove of some service to those who, along with herself, may have experienced the needs and lamented the failures, to which she has sought to direct attention.

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

A Second Edition having been thus early called for, the Author begs to acknowledge with gratitude the kind reception which her little volume has met with, and to state,—for the purpose of removing a misapprehension of which she has been informed,—that comparatively but a small portion of this work has appeared in another form.

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WORK.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."—Eccles. ix. 10.

"Man hath his daily work of body or mind
Appointed, which declares his dignity,
And the regard of Heaven on all his ways,
While other animals inactive range,
And of their doings God takes no account."

Paradise Lost.

Idleness has no place in the busy and beautiful creation of God; it enters not into His thoughts and ways; it is opposed to all that He has said, and to all that He has done. Work,—various it is true in kind and degree,—is one of the laws of the universe. In our own planet at this moment, multitudes of busy hands and busy heads are to be found in all directions. The merchant at the desk,—the labourer in the field,—the statesman in the cabinet,—the author in the study,—the red Indian in the hunting ground,—the gold digger in the mine,—and a great

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company whose work as a whole constitutes the very essence of social order. It is true that men have taken advantage of this to hold the scales of work with an uneven hand, and to mete an unjust measure. Hence the cry of the slave,—hence the "long hours" of the factory,—hence the mournful song of the seamstress.

This does not however interfere with the fact that work is an element of our being. It is not only a barter for food, and raiment, and gold, but it is intended and fitted to produce happiness;—while the unworking classes, sensible of the deficiency, are obliged to assume the semblance of work, and toil in their vocation of finding pleasure. Nor is this principle confined to our earth. We know not what passes within the starry mansions; but the planet in its revolution, the satellite in its perturbations, the comet in its eccentric path, are all working their appointed work; while light and heat, snow and vapours, and stormy winds, fulfil the word of their Creator.

While such is the universal law, its principle and practice have been so marred by the selfishness of man, that we must look to the Gospel for the remedy of the evil, and for those high and holy motives by which the true service of God ought to be characterized and sustained. We accordingly find that there is one great and peculiar privilege amongst many, which God accords to those who,

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being redeemed by the blood of Christ, occupy the twofold position of children and servants. He allows such to work *for Him.* Nor is this a mere nominal position. He condescends to call them to His help. He gives each a different "charge to keep," which if he neglects, God's glory will suffer loss. He gives each a field to cultivate, and if the furrows are thinly sown, where will be the summer harvest? In looking around, however, upon the Christian Church, it is startingly evident that there is more profession than practice, more words than deeds, more fair green leaves than ripe wholesome fruit. There are indeed many whose works the day alone will declare, for even their left hand knoweth not what the right hath done; and there is ever a staff of open zealous workers, a record of whose deeds is left behind,

"Like foot-prints on the sands of time."

Still there remains a large number of professing Christians who do not work, or at least do not work thoroughly and acceptably, from want of power, or opportunity, or understanding.

There are many who marvel at the idea of work being a *privilege,*—many whose whole felicity is comprised in the *dolce far niente* of their negative existence, or in the excitement of their pursuit after bright glancing butterflies. There are others who do not understand the privilege of work, though they are hard workers, harder than any others, for they

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work as if to complete the tale of bricks for an Egyptian task-master. Others there also are, and a vast proportion in the present practical age, who delight in work for its own sake; their whole lives are passed in meditating and in accomplishing work,—successful work,—useful work,—work to be honoured in all ages. There are yet others whose heads droop, and whose hands hang down; and who, when they hear that work is a privilege possessed by the children of God, are ready to fancy that such they cannot be, for alas! they are of no use in the world,—God has given them no work to do for Him. Now, to the first class we have nothing to say, unless to bid them learn wisdom from the bee and the bird, and the silent but ever-working monitors who dwell in the little peopled cities on every hill-side.—(Prov. vi. 6.) Neither do we speak to the second class, because they are not working *for God*,—they are emphatically working for *themselves*, and in the way most offensive to God, for they are trying to hew out a door of their own into heaven,—their works are "dead works," or "splendid sins," as St. Augustine said of such. Nor can we invite the third class to listen to us, for neither are they working for God, even though their work may often look like God's work,—they are working for fame, for occupation, for excitement, for philanthropy; they are working because they cannot help working,—because to be busy is a principle of their nature. But we turn to

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the fourth class, because we would fain say a few words to open their eyes to see, and their ears to hear something of all that their Master is doing, and speaking, and requiring from them.

Of course, we do not refer to those who turn away from work when it is before them, because they do not like it, and listlessly dream away their lives in imagining work that they would do if they had it,—work that would suit their natural temperaments, or in other words, their natural selfishness. No; but we speak to a class much more numerous than is generally supposed,—those who are ready and willing to work for God—more than willing—tremulously anxious to do something for Him who has done so much for them, but who, from nervous, easily discouraged temperaments, and a false understanding of the nature of work, oftentimes imagine that they have neither niche in the temple, nor place in the vineyard. Such Christians look with a feeling akin to envy upon those who are engaged in special and visible work,—in teaching the ignorant, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner, ministering to the sick, winning souls to Jesus. Are you, dear friend, whom we now address, prevented from doing this by peculiar causes known only to yourself? It may be delicacy of health, difficulty of position, many incompatible duties, dependence on the will of others, want of pecuniary means, or all of these combined. The cause or causes, though quite apparent and necessarily con-

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straining to yourself, may not be equally visible to the world; and the fear of being looked upon by those who do not understand your position, as one whose faith, being without works, is dead, and thus dishonouring to the cause of your Master, is perhaps adding a deeper shade to your discouragement—a sharper sting to your sorrow. Is it so? Then we would attempt to impress the blessed fact upon your mind, that you are now in a working position, if you have a working spirit. In the routine of your every-day life, you have work given you to do, although you do not recognise it,—it is waiting at your side, although you are looking away in search of something which your Master has not seen fit to give.

One great and general mistake evidently arises from a separation between the different parts of the Christian's duty. A young believer was one day mourning over the quantity of *world's work* which she had to do. "Do not call it such," said a farther advanced friend; "there is no world's work to the believer; it is all the *Lord's work*." In short, the Christian's whole life is a work for God; when he becomes the Lord's, he ceases to be his own. He is bought with a price; and from the time when he feels the first rush of grateful love, there need never be an hour or a moment in which he is not accomplishing the primary part of "man's chief end,"—the glorifying of God. He may rise up in the bright morning prime, and go forth to the various duties

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and intricacies of the day with the blessed assurance that the eye of his benign Master is smiling upon him the while, and that He is accepting and treasuring the smallest services, if done for His sake, and washed in the blood that is required to purify all; and when, returning to his home, he enjoys the rest and relaxation of the sweet dewy evening, he may rejoice in the thought that this also is not wasted time, but that in fitting and refreshing him for the morrow's work, it is in itself also service for God.

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II.

WARFARE WORK.

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—JOHN vi. 28, 29.

"Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."—NEH. iv. 17.

"Fight the fight, Christian,
Jesus is o'er thee;
Run the race, Christian,
Heaven's before thee.
Thee from the love of Christ,
Nothing can sever;
Mount, when thy work is done,
Praise Him for ever."

WE have placed this species of work first, although it is not an outer, but an inner service. The results of the struggle are, however, apparent to all, and the work that has been begun in the hidden temple, will manifest itself in the external vineyard. In fact, without the warfare there can be no successful work; without the weapon in the one hand, there is little use of the trowel in the other. Till the soul has worked out its own salvation with fear and trembling, the hand will not be confident, nor the step unfaltering in the service of God.

There is no danger of any Christian being without

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work in abundance, for sufficient is here laid before him for a long life-time. It is not easy to believe; nay, it is very difficult truly and simply to believe in Jesus Christ; and yet in the passage quoted above, He himself speaks of it as the work of all others, which is to be worked for God. When our hearts are crusted over by carnal reason, and doubt, and difficulty, it is no easy matter to take again the heart of a little child, and simply believe our Father's true word; yet this is a needful work for His children. When self-righteousness, strong and throbbing, whispers that it is long enough for a couch, and broad enough for a covering, then it is difficult indeed to cast off its "rags," and to put on a spotless robe which we have had no share in weaving; yet, this too is one of the works of God. When all within us is dark and dreary; when a thick, heavy veil seems to hang between us and all that was once clear and bright to our vision; when we *know*, but do not *feel*, that we are sinners, and Jesus Christ a Saviour,—then there is nothing in the whole world so difficult as to look up and say, "MY Lord, and MY God." But, every time that we take the sword of the Spirit and cleave asunder the veil, and mount up, up, far beyond the mists, to the light-surrounded throne, and see there, and love there the Lamb as it had been slain, we are working a work more honouring to God than any other. Look up then, desponding and self-righteous, and doubting believer, look up—believe and live—believe and *work*.

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This, however, is but the beginning of warfare work,—it is continued through the whole upward struggle. Holiness, the result of faith,—does not enter the heart quietly and gently, though it brings joy and peace; it causes a hard struggle, a fierce warfare with the old unholy inhabitants of the heart. We may fully trust in earthly friend or father, and there is none to hinder us; we may pour devoted love upon beings like ourselves, and all within the heart is in unison; but we cannot confide in Him who beseeches our confidence, without contesting every inch of the ground with fierce foes from within; we cannot love Him, who is the lover of our souls, without heart rivals starting up to dispute the supremacy. Where is the human heart that has not its besetting sin, its chosen idol? Where is the renewed heart that is not struggling, or attempting to struggle, in the agonies of its crucifixion? The idol-breaking work in each individual is as much of a reality, as the iconoclastic work of bygone centuries—the idols that are unseen, are as real as the Juggernauts of India, and the images of Rome. Every time, however, that the Holy Spirit enables us to dethrone the usurper, to bear the suffering, to resist the temptation, to love the Loving One, to trust in the true Friend, we are gaining ground in holiness—the chief end of the new creation—and we are working the work of God. Nor is it alone for Him; it is also a work for others—every self-conquest, every progress in

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sanctification, is an increase of influence over souls. When the armour is laid aside—when the sword falls from the nerveless arm—when sin is allowed to triumph, and holiness is forgotten, or deferred till the morrow—then words of warning to the sinner, of counsel to the backsliding, of sympathy to the sorrowful, come carelessly and coldly from our lips. It is only when we have put on the whole armour of God—when we are resisting unto blood, striving against sin—when we are mourning over our defeats, and fleeing to the Strong One for strength, that we can minister to the needy, that we can arm the unarmed, that we can shew the way to Him who giveth us the victory through Christ our living Lord.

Besides this inner struggle, there is another which bears more upon the outward life, and may be called a warfare with circumstance. We have said that it is only the renewed heart that is the battle-ground of the one, but all are more or less engaged in the other. All have a crook in the lot, a skeleton at the feast; all have a conflict to maintain with contending duties and perplexing difficulties, with intricate positions, with cares, strifes, and sorrows. Very different, however, are the ways in which this warfare is waged. Some struggle because they cannot help it, and are like "the dumb driven cattle;" others are so feeble in their grasp, so faltering in their step, that they soon

"By the roadside fall and perish,
Weary with the march of Life."

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Others attempt to strew the ground with flowers, to dispel the darkness with *ignes fatui*—to conceal even from themselves that they have a conflict to maintain; although none know better how the iron of unused weapons enters into the soul, how sharp are the thorns of the rose, how deluding is the light of the meteor. Others are strong in their own strength, and stoically bear the wounds, and handle the weapons, but a time of defeat surely comes, when they are heard to say, "All these things are against us." It is the Christian only, who, going not forth at his own charges, can engage in the Life-battle joyfully and successfully. That victory which secures temporal rest and enjoyment, is of less importance to him than to others, for he knows that all things are working together for his good, and he is sure of a coming time of entire repose; but he struggles against despondency, he conquers difficulties, he rises above sorrows and disappointments, that his Father may be glorified in him to the utmost, and that by so doing he may work a good work of faith and patience.

The encouragements to warfare work are many and great. The Captain of our salvation is pledged for our victory. He is engaged to "cover our heads in the day of battle," and through Him we shall be more than conquerors. Unlike the iron warriors of the earth, His heart bleeds in His soldier's wounds; He feels the pangs of the cut off arm and the plucked out eye; and He rejoices in His own promise of a

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blessed future, when "the warfare shall be accomplished," when the conquered land shall be possessed. We cannot conclude this chapter better than by the following extract from Gurnall's "Christian in Complete Armour:"—"The Christian armour is made to be worn; no laying down or putting off our armour, till we have done our warfare, and finished our course. Our armour and our garments of flesh go off together; then indeed will be no need of watch and ward, shield or helmet. Those military duties and field graces, (as I may call faith, hope, and the rest,) they shall be honourably discharged. In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory; but here they are to be worn night and day; we must walk, work, and sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ."

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III.

EVERY-DAY WORK.

"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do *all* to the glory of God."—1 Cor. x. 31.

"We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky.
The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask,—
Room to deny ourselves,—a road
To bring us daily nearer God."—Keble.

"All may of Thee partake,
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture, for thy sake,
Will not grow bright and clean;
This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold,
For that which God doth touch and own,
Cannot for less be told."—Herbert.

Those who wish to bestow the years of their life upon God, must also give Him the days, the hours, and the moments. Bickersteth says, "Only think of present duties, the moment's work: our life is given to us in moments, and we shall have joys for each." Every-day work is often looked upon as waste of time, or only fitted for those who have no exalted sensibilities, no heroic purposes, no aspirations after the higher

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services of God. We strongly suspect, however, that those who can see no true sublimity in the faithful performance of lowly and self-denying tasks, even to the "sweeping of a floor" if need be,* will fall very far short of the heroism and magnanimity required for the sacrifices and the services which they think themselves prepared to offer. On the other hand, the missionary will be all the better fitted for his noble career, if he has been faithful in the daily mission of life; the martyr will not suffer with less fortitude, because he has long taken up meekly the daily cross. Heroism, in fact, is rarely understood to be, simply,—uncompromised duty! Heroism, which is not duty, is but a dream of the dark ages. Duty that is not performed with the spirit of a hero, is but the mortar and the brick of hard bondage. The hero understood this, who proclaimed to his heroes, no premature pæans of secure victory, no highly wrought representations of martial glory, but the simple words, "England expects every man to do his duty!" and the aggregate of individual duty was triumphant heroism. In the daily walks of life unseen and unadmired, there may exist the truest heroic elements; and

> "All may find, if they dare choose,
> A glorious life and grave"

in the sphere of commonplace duty. It is not very long since a prince in Israel went from amidst his

* "He that sweeps a floor as for God's law,
Makes that and the action fine."—HERBERT.

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peers, and most of his "glorious life" was lived in a grocer's shop. We think that none can rise from the perusal of the "Successful Merchant,"* without feeling the strength and the stateliness of that spirit of grace, which can shed beauty upon what might else be unseemly, and stamp nobility where the world had not bestowed it. "Elizius, an eminent French bishop, born at Chatelât, A.D. 588, became known in the Church, not from the fame of his learning, not from the austerities practised in his age, but from the skill, fidelity, and success which he displayed in the goldsmith's shop, which was then the scene of his daily labours. His learned biographer says,—'Religion gave him strength and interest in his work; and as his work constrained him to attend to earthly things, he felt all the more the necessity of refreshing his spirit with spiritual things.' The religion which had thus shed its lustre upon the shop of the artisan, did not stop there. The influence which his honesty, economy, and frequently tried principle, obtained for him, paved the way for his religious labours amongst the ignorant people by whom he was surrounded, and when a bishopric became vacant, that required to be filled by one peculiarly laborious and devoted, he was unanimously elected. His goings out and comings in, and the commencement of all his undertakings, had long been accompanied by prayer, while the open Bible, which we are told was spread before the dili-

* Or Memoirs of Samuel Budget, Esq. By William Arthur, A.M.

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gent fashioner of the fine gold, was the best school of divinity for the future bishop.*

It is a common idea, and we may venture to say, a common mistake, that attention to every-day affairs is incompatible with genius. Now it seems to us that the highest attainment and ambition of this rarely understood gift—especially in woman—ought to be the power of performing all duty, from the highest to the humblest, with energy and success, so that its possessor may bestow happiness, soothe sorrows, inculcate truth, and accomplish the tasks of Life more successfully than they from whom it has been withheld. The genius which turns in disgust from what is plain and homely, and confines itself to the ecstatic regions of sentiment, is a spurious or at best a defective quality, and lacks the unity and enlargement of true power.

Look around then, you who are yearning to be employed in the service of your God, and try to realize what He has given you to do *to-day*, and do not look beyond it. Strength is promised according to your day, but not according to your morrow. Every-day work requires every-day grace, and every-day grace requires every-day asking. Just try the experiment then, for once,—no matter what your occupation may be,—no matter how distasteful to your natural disposition,—the more distasteful the

* "Light in the Dark Places; or, Memorials of Christian Life in the Middle Ages." From the German of Neander.

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better, so long as it is your duty. It may be the arithmetic lesson taught to the little wayward child —or the wearisome drive with the complaining invalid—or the petty and fatiguing duties and arrangements attendant upon your household concerns, or the routine of the shop, or the counting-house, or the writing-office; whatever it is, take it first to God. Before you begin, kneel and implore His blessing; ask Him for a fresh, diligent spirit; ask Him for a spirit of patience and meekness in contending with all the little wearisome difficulties and annoyances connected with it; ask Him to enable you not only to *bear* the daily cross, but to "take it up," denying yourself and following the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. (Luke ix. 23.) Then put your whole might into it,—the might that you have borrowed from a mightier than yourself, for that is the secret of real work. Do it as if your Master were standing before you,—do it as you would have cast the net into the sea,—as you would have fastened together the tent, —as you would have laboured in the carpenter's shop,—had you lived in the early days with Christ and His Apostles. Do not offer to God the blind, and the lame, and the maimed things of your mind; do not offer a spirit dreaming of the great things which you could do, or may do at some other time, but offer to Him your wakeful, rejoicing, *present* energies, and you will find how brightly the day beams upon you, —how sweetly the night gives you sleep,—and how

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gratefully your heart swells with a sense of the tenderness of God as a Father, as well as His benignity as a Master.

We think it was John Newton who went one day to visit a Christian brother, and found him busily engaged in his occupation of tanning. The man attempted to apologize. "Just so, my friend," said his pastor, "may your Lord find you when He comes; it is the work He has given you to do, and He expects you to do it diligently."

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IV.

SOCIAL WORK.

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us."—PSALM xc. 17.

"Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."—TITUS ii. 10.

"I ask thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And wipe the weeping eyes:
And a heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathize.

"Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship of hearts,
To keep and cultivate;
And a work of lowly love to do,
For the Lord on whom I wait."

THERE are few trials so grievous to the Christian as the necessity of being much in uncongenial society; even if his natural temperament is not entirely opposed to it, his renewed one revolts from it altogether. If this is your position, dear friend, we can imagine your heart fainting, and your spirit failing within you. When you would love to be still and silent, with your heart lifted up in blessed communion with your Saviour, or taking "sweet counsel" with His people, or when you would fain be employed in

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active service in His vineyard, you are obliged to go into scenes whence you return home despondingly, feeling that there you have left some of your precious things, without having imparted them to others; your bodily strength is worn out by what seems labour worse than wasted, and day after day finds you and leaves you weary, and useless, and murmuring. This must not be. When safely within the ark yourself, you are, it is true,

> "Sheltered, but not to social duties lost:
> Secluded, but not buried."
>
> WORDSWORTH.

God has allotted to you a social work to do for Him, and how grieved He must be when His servant, Jonah-like, flies from it. It has been eloquently said by one, herself, alas! a stranger to the highest element of this species of service,—"No, we cannot leave society while one clod remains unpervaded by Divine life. We cannot live and grow in consecrated earth alone."* Keep this work ever before you—self-denial is one part of it; the adorning of the doctrine of your Saviour is another; the winning of souls to Christ by your influence, noiseless and nameless as it may be, is another; and soon you will find the evil to yourself obviated, despondency vanishing, and an object of deep interest rising into your present objectless life. To give an example how the principle may be reduced to practice in what are called "little things," (although nothing is little in the sight

* Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli.

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of the great God ;) the next time that your brow is shadowed and your tone impatient because of the arrival of one visitor after another, interrupting a favourite occupation ; or a cherished scheme of doing good ; or that you are obliged to go forth to the social circle, when you would rather be resting beside your own pleasant fireside ; go to Him who went forth from the mountain, and the Kedron, to be buffeted in the busy world—ask for the same Spirit that was in Him, to make you a willing servant in any way that He pleases ; take up the little cross cheerfully, smooth your perturbed brow, get your heart filled with interest, and your eyes brightened with kindliness ; and in the pleasant glance, the genuine cordiality, the gentle word spoken in season, perchance to those not accustomed to gentleness, you will be doing real though humble work for God,—all the more real and the more acceptable that it is work which none will know and none applaud.

Inseparable from this kind of work, there is the work of influence, both conscious and unconscious ; for the latter we would refer our readers to the admirable little tract called "Unconscious Influence ;" with regard to the former, we would seek to impress upon all the necessity of cultivating diligently a talent which God has confided to the trust of every one. There is no form of false humility more common than that which prompts the remark, "Alas ! *I* possess no influence,—what can *I* do ?" Now it is true

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that many have no wealth, no beauty, no rank, no accomplishments, no intellect; but there never has been a heart created since the world began, that has not received and exerted the precious though much-abused gift of influence. How is this? Just because every heart has the power of loving. We have heard the well-known answer of Cecil's little daughter, quoted by one of the greatest of our living poets, as containing the essence of the truest, most thrilling poetry; it certainly contains the essence of the truest influence:—"Mary, why does every body love you so much?" "Oh, papa, I think it must be because I love every body!"

Here, then, is a work which all have to do. "Love is power;" therefore love is work, if the power is used for God. The sunshine has its work to do; it penetrates into all dark places, all dreary nooks and crevices, lighting up and cheering; it brings life and warmth to the chilled and torpid; it gives colour to the flower, and ripeness to the fruit; it takes a message into every heart, for all hearts love the sunshine, and it speaks of hope and comfort even to the kneelers beside a dying bed. Just so may the loving heart do: it may not be a powerful heart—it may not be a wise heart—it may not be a rich heart; but if it is a loving heart, it will go about cheering and lighting up, warming and colouring, and ripening all things just like the sun. One of the most hardened offenders in Newgate, when she was brought to the

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feet of Jesus in her right mind, declared that it was Mrs. Fry's "*Look of Love*," that first led her to hope that she too might be saved; and most of us know well the effect of a kindly sympathizing look, shining upon us in the midst of heart darkness, like a burst of light and blue sky on a "rainy day," that was "cold, and dark, and dreary."

Closely allied to the loving heart and the loving look is the loving manner; and yet these three are often at variance, and we are wounded by the thorns and the briers when beneath are blossoming fresh lovely rose-buds. Many very good people seem to think it a duty to keep their hearts locked and padlocked, for fear of casting their pearls into the mire; others are intensely disagreeable, because it is their way, and "what does manner signify?" Others are painfully aware of their defects, but the habits of early life are too strong for them. And so it comes to pass that we so frequently meet with that anomaly in grace,—*a disagreeable Christian*. Have you ever thought seriously of the sin which it involves? Have you ever thought that it makes the religion of your gentle, genial Master appear disagreeable too? Have you ever thought, that as the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon the cup of cold water as given to Him, so He will look upon the wounded feeling, the repulsed confidence, the bruised spirit, as given to Him also? Oh, it is a sad thing to fold up in a napkin the talent of manner, to lose the key of the casket, to forget

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the *Sesame* to the hearts of men! Let it not be objected that this implies insincerity or affectation,—that it is assuming something which is not felt. If the heart is right with God, glowing with love to Jesus, and filled with the fruits of the Spirit, there is no fear of insincerity in a manner expressing interest, and sympathy, and kindness, and compassion towards all; for all are "possible angels," possible redeemed ones!

Closely connected with the law of love, there is the "Law of Consideration." Mrs. Hannah More, of whom we shall give a slight sketch at the end of the chapter, was so impressed with the necessity of this quality, that she expressed her intention of writing a treatise upon it, which, however, she unhappily never accomplished. It is not so necessarily a part of love as influence, for many loving hearts who would lay them down to die for the objects of their affections, yet lack the minute thoughtfulness, the attentive watching, the intuitive knowledge, "the determination,"—to use Mrs. More's words—"to be the author, in the common matters of life, of as little unnecessary uneasiness, trouble, or inconvenience as possible," which are essential parts of the law of consideration. This law is simply a fulfilment in its strictest sense of the command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself;" for who does not like to be thought of, and thought for? Who does not wish to be saved from the pin-points of trouble and uneasiness which we suffer, and make others suffer every day from

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want of consideration? This quality is peculiarly alluded to, when God says, "Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor," which is not a benediction upon those who give large alms and do great things for them, but upon those who *consider* their case, and with wisdom and tenderness think for them and do for them according to their ability.

We must allude in passing, to a subject which often causes doubt and embarrassment to the conscientious Christian, viz., the lawfulness of cultivating what are called "accomplishments." In accordance with the views stated above, we look upon it as a *duty* to do so. Has God given beautiful gifts for the purpose of being buried in the earth? If the soul-cheering art of the musician, the singing of sweet songs, and the still more noble studies of the pencil and the palette, are not abused, but used for the relaxation and refreshment of the wearied mind, and as means of influence and attraction over others, they are consecrated into work for the Bountiful One, who giveth us all things, richly to be enjoyed. Indeed, viewed as the medium of giving pleasure, they become no small element in the social work; there are ever some irritable and Saul-like temperaments which can be soothed and comforted by heart-reaching strains of music; there are ever some minds which will give more respect to the religion that is accompanied by gifts and accomplishments, simply and cheerfully exercised.

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The quality most required in social work, is that most difficult to be obtained even at a throne of grace, —unselfishness! There are few imputations from which we start back so sensitively as the charge of selfishness, and never is it more justly founded than when in our own estimation we are peculiarly free from its dominion. All our social faults, however, flow from this source, and we are apt to forget that it is not only selfishness displayed to men, but also displayed to Him who pleased not Himself. God has given us His will upon this point clearly and strongly expressed in the Golden Rule—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," and its twin commandment—"Love thy neighbour as thyself." Such, doubtless, is the code of the social circle above, but it is *not* upon earth as it is in heaven. From whence proceeds that "entrenchment in our own individuality," as it has been well expressed by a modern writer, which prevents us from admitting any within the pale of our sympathies, who do not "interest" us, as the phrase is, or with whom we have "no ideas in common?" From whence comes the feeling of self-congratulation—"Lo, I am better than thou, wiser than thou, created of finer clay, and gifted with higher intelligence than thou?" From whence come the indifferent manner, the hasty judgment, the supercilious look, the witty story told at the expense of an acquaintance? From whence the carelessness of the pur-

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suits, the wishes and the feelings of our neighbours? From whence, save from the deliberate breach of God's commandments. Christians though we be, we do *not* love our neighbour as ourselves,—we do *not* unto him as we wish him to do unto us.

Here is a work then placed before each, a work of obedience so arduous and so momentous, that instead of any bemoaning the absence of work, they might be more easily excused, were they to exclaim despondingly—"Who is sufficient for these things?" Up, then, rouse you from your lethargy,—do battle with the principle of self within you,—unlock this exclusiveness,—escape from this indifference. What! indifferent to any whom you may meet in heaven, or rescue from hell? Throw shaft and pulley into the yet unworked mine of manner, of affection, of influence, and precious will be the treasures that come forth from the depths. Replace the gossip, the self-estimation, the superciliousness by kind looks, thoughtful actions, encouraging words. Lend a helping hand to some, who, though they have failed to "interest," may yet be sorely discouraged because of the way. Draw forth the good that there is in all. "None are all evil." Many hearts that appear hard and inaccessible will be found in the sunshine of kindness like the granite rock in the south, which emits sweet music at sunrise. Many still more icy, resemble the snowy Andes which are not without their currents of genial air.

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Were there no other instrument for social work placed in our possession than the wonderful one of *speech*, what a wide range of usefulness would be opened up to us, and how startling the thought of the multitude of "idle words" which are gathering against us for the day of judgment! One able writer* informs us that every spoken word causes a vibration in the air which spreads in all directions round the whole world, and produces a change in the atmosphere which alters it through all future time. Another† declares that "the air is one vast library in whose pages are for ever written all that man has said, and woman whispered." Alas! for the bulky volumes of the idle and the hurtful thus strangely registered, compared with the small compass required for words to which God hearkens and writes in the book of His remembrance. Such statements in some measure realize to us the wonderful significance of language which in some such way may now be registering its silent records, hereafter to witness against us with loud and startling re-utterance.

To draw the poison from "the unruly evil," to tame the tameless member, to guide aright the small helm which turneth about great ships,‡ is no easy, unworthy, or merely negative work. "Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and pleasant to the bones."§ The fountain which has

* Dr. Hitchcock in his "Religion of Geology." † Mr. Babbage.
‡ James iii. 4-8. § Prov. xvi. 24.

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hitherto sent forth a bitter flood, may send forth the sweet waters of affection and blessing; the "idle words" may be changed into the busy ones of gentleness and sympathy; the harsh accents into a sweet voice, persuading men to listen to the yet sweeter, which says, "Beloved, love one another."

So important is the social vocation, that we cannot consider any species or degree of work,—needful though it may seem,—to be work befitting the Christian, which interferes with the cultivation of social interests, and social amenities. It is at best only one species of work untimeously displacing another, which cannot be pleasing to the God of order and design. We quote the following admirable passage from the accomplished authoress of "Anna; or, Passages in a Home Life." "When God is teaching us lessons on this subject, we begin to see that circumstances as well as commands are but an expression of His will. We then feel that no outward thing can really 'hinder' us. A 'vexatious interruption to duty,' we perceive to be a contradiction in terms. . . . Let us thank God and take courage when it is so with us; let us take the full comfort of this *fact*,—that we are servants, and have really no work of our own to do,—nothing which we are striving to accomplish *on our own account*. We have no selfish schemes which circumstances may thwart, we acknowledge no selfish hopes which they may destroy. It is blessedness, indeed, to have

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accepted as our only portion, that His will should be done,—in us, and for us, and by us for ever!"

It must be remarked that there is no small degree of danger connected with social work, and no small degree of grace required to enable us to walk in wisdom. The temptations are great to overstep the line of demarcation between the social sphere in which God has placed us, and the worldly sphere in which God has *not* placed us,—to be unduly all things to all men, and to seek, and perhaps to find, a degree of popularity which may interfere with the simplicity of our work. Rutherford says, that the Christian in society must be like "the fresh river that keepeth its own fresh taste in the salt sea."

We are not without bright examples of the practicability and the importance of such a work. One there was, who lately belonged to our own times, but who now belongs to the times of heaven; her spirit like the sandal tree was fragrant as well as fruitful, and though the life has departed from the stem, the fragrance yet lingers, and the fruit yet remains. Fifty years ago a lovely spot in Wiltshire received the name of Barley Wood. Situated on elevated ground commanding picturesque and beautiful views, its lawns and its gardens bore the marks of graceful and constant cultivation. So retired and so peaceful was its aspect, that when told it was the abode of a Christian lady, the passer-by might think that she had taken wings like a dove, according to

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the wish of the Psalmist, and flown away from the busy world. Barley Wood, however, was in one sense a world in miniature. Rank and wealth and fashion found their way there, to sun themselves in the smile of a graceful and courteous hostess. Men of taste and literature sought the dwelling of Hannah More. The afflicted, and the ignorant, and the perplexed, went for help and instruction. There was besides another world of correspondence to be dealt with,—a large system of schools to be superintended, the most arduous literary tasks to be performed—while the woman called to these conflicting claims and duties was no longer young, but bowed down by sickness and bereavement. How then do we find her performing her social work under such trying circumstances? We are told by the biographers of Hannah More, that when first introduced to worldly people, she did not immediately enter upon the subject of religion, but tried to use the charm of her influence to do away prejudice, and to prepare the way for more personal dealing; if, however, she knew that she might not again have an opportunity, she used to come to the point at once. Peculiarly sensible to her influence, many youthful hearts were thus led to Jesus, and in the midst of the most worldly society, she never forgot to confess her Master before men. It was said of her that whatever was the party and the topic, "upon her tongue was the law of kindness; there was never a word to offend, or wound,

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or grieve, but always something to instruct and improve. Her thoughts were always given to the business of the moment with concentration and energy; nor was any duty too small to be performed with care and prayerful diligence, if it was large enough to affect the comfort, the feelings, and the interests of those around her. Along with the marvellous testimonies to her Christian and social graces, which greeted this mother in Israel on all sides, there was one, which, although simple and homely in its expression, requires many, and various, and *rare* qualities—she was pronounced to be "a person most easy to be lived with."

Wilberforce was another great and striking example of religion carried into the social sphere without injury to his own spirituality. When he went into society he used to prepare what he called "*launchers*," or questions and subjects for discourse, suitable for introducing the spiritual conversation, which he endeavoured to make useful to a class of whom Wesley said, in a message to Hannah More, "Tell her to make that her sphere—they will not listen to *us*." Lord Bacon makes the following striking observations in his Essay upon Goodness:—"If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shews he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them; if he be compassionate towards the afflictions of others, it shews that his heart is like the

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noble tree, that is wounded itself when it gives the balm; if he easily pardons and remits offences, it shews that his mind is planted above injuries, so that he cannot be shot; if he be thankful for small benefits, it shews that he weighs men's minds, and not their trash; but above all, if he have St. Paul's perfection, that he would wish to be an anathema from Christ, for the salvation of his brethren, it shews much of a divine nature, and a kind of conformity with Christ himself."

Without multiplying examples and quotations, however, we shall only farther cite an often read, often lauded, often forgotten, yet faultless code for social manners. Were its sublime precepts to be fully observed, the wilderness might blossom as the rose, the lion might lie down with the lamb, and there might be nothing to hurt or destroy in the holy mountain. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."—1 Cor. xiii. 4-7.

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V.

HOME WORK.

"Howbeit Jesus suffered him not; but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."—MARK v. 19.
"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house."—HEB. iii. 5.

"Poor indeed thou must be, if around thee
Thou no ray of light and joy canst throw,
If no silken cord of love hath bound thee,
To some little world through weal and wo.

"If no dear eyes thy tender love can brighten,
No fond voices answer to thy own,
If no brother's sorrow thou canst lighten,
By daily sympathy and gentle tone.

"Daily struggling, though enclosed and lonely,
Every day a rich reward will give,
Thou wilt find, by hearty striving only,
And truly loving, thou canst truly live."

HARRIET WINSLOW.

THERE is a safe and easily applied test by which to determine whether the Christian in society is indeed working for God or for himself. If the social work is not carried into the home, finding there a narrower, though not less difficult sphere, there ought to arise a suspicion, that excitement and love of popularity may have somewhat to do with our social zeal. That Church which sent forth its whole strength in missions to far lands, and left its home

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thousands to starve and die, could not be in a healthy condition; and that soul is in much the same state, which expends its energies upon work without doors, and neglects the work within. If each individual Christian performed faithfully his and her share in the *home mission*—if each cultivated carefully the little garden within his own gates—if each were a faithful steward in the household charge, there would, indeed, be fewer homes that are not homes—there would be fewer flowerless and unwatered gardens—there would be fewer of those arrears of which the Lord, when He comes, will take strict account.

There is one feeling and desire in the human heart which is universal—all wish *to be understood.* In ordinary acquaintanceship, how frequently the complaint meets the ear—"We cannot come on together, for he never *understands* me." The constitution of the one mind is a mystery to the other—the language of the one heart an unknown tongue to the other. It is strange that in the home, and by the household hearth, encircled by one family, where we might expect misapprehension to be unknown, it exists as frequently as in any other place; jars, coldnesses, constraints, and dissensions, all arise from it—while even sisters, whose hearts God has created to throb in unison, are often obliged to seek elsewhere that appreciation and sympathy which they have not found in each other. Now, there is a serious home sin involved here. Whenever any one complains of not

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being understood, it will generally be found to arise from the want of trying *to understand.* If people would think less of themselves, and be less intensely sympathetic with the intricacies and sensitivenesses of their own hearts, and pay more attention to the peculiarities of others, the evil would probably be greatly obviated. We are aware that many feel rather proud than otherwise of "not being understood," even in their own homes, and consider it a proof of genius and highly-wrought sensibilities. We cannot help regarding it, however, as a mark of decided inferiority of mind. True genius is ever easily understood, and true genius ever easily understands. They who are really possessed of true genius, combined with deep and tender feeling, are in possession of treasures not to be locked up in inaccessible coffers, or brought out occasionally to be counted and admired, but to be used every day to gladden and benefit all around. Let them sympathize with others, and others will soon sympathize with them. Let them cast the light of their love upon home hearts, and it will soon so illumine their own, that all who run may read the once mysterious characters.

In home work, home sunshine is a very important element. Many conscientious people strive to perform, and actually do perform, all their home duties faithfully and earnestly, and still there is felt to be somewhere a startling deficiency. They are not seen in their homes as their Saviour would have been, had

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He shared a home wherein to lay His head, diffusing light and strength, and consolation. What is specially lacking there, is joyfulness blended with their work. They have not taken the joy of the Lord as their strength, and they have separated the two things which God hath joined together—duty and sunshine.

> "A solemn yet a joyful thing is life,
> Which, being full of duties, is for this
> Of gladness full, and full of lofty hopes."

Even as the sunbeam is composed of millions of minute rays, the home light must be constituted of little tendernesses, kindly looks, sweet laughter, gentle words, loving counsels; it must not be like the torch-blaze of natural excitement, which is easily quenched, but like the serene, chastened light, which burns as safely in the day of the east wind as in the serenest atmosphere. Let each bear the other's burden the while—let each cultivate the mutual confidence, which is a gift capable of increase and improvement—and soon it will be found that kindliness will spring up on every side, displacing constraint, unsuitability, want of mutual knowledge, even as we have seen sweet violets and primrose buds dispelling the gloom of the grey sea rocks.

The most obvious of all home sins is that of *temper*. Too often do Christians, who are all sweetness and graciousness in society, appear (to use the simile of Rowland Hill) as if ingrafted upon crab-trees in

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their own homes. The most visible manifestations of this sin, in passionate outbreaks, violent words, and fits of sullenness, are so odious in themselves, and cause so much misery to their authors, as well as to their victims, that when a Christian is liable to be possessed by this evil spirit, he is generally on his guard, and watches and mourns because of it. There are various lesser degrees, however, which are often perceptible in those who would be exceedingly, and, perchance, justly indignant were they to be designated as ill-tempered. The want of gentleness in tone and look—the needless difficulty and objection thrown in the way of the eager and the energetic—the undue regard to our own "dignity" (much abused word) when offended, forgetting that

"To err is human—to forgive divine;"

the maintenance of our own opinions simply because they *are* our own, and the feeling of irritation at the opposition they encounter—the assumption, however slight, of superiority and self-importance—the undue attachment to our own methods and our own ways—the painful allusion and ill-timed jest—the jealousy of others, and the over-exaction of affection, attention, and sympathy, are all off-shoots of the crab-tree:—and even as we find in nature the finest species of apples, if unpruned and uncultivated, returning to the native crab, so the heart, unkept and untended, will become, even when renewed, bitter in its fruits, and degenerate in its soil.

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Great part of the home work, therefore, will consist in a constant watch and ward over this besetting sin, in its dwelling within the heart, as well as its outward avenues. It is not enough to repress the word, if the irritated feeling remains within; it is not enough to smooth the unloving look, if the heart itself be void of love; and this must be done not for our own comfort, because a happy home is desirable, or because it is pleasant to be loved and praised, but because it is part of the work by which God is to be glorified in us. This principle must be carried into every relation of life; without it there is danger, on the one hand, of the work being turned into self-idolatry, or idolatry of others as belonging to ourselves; and, on the other hand, of its being left undone.

The mother is too apt to joy in her little ones as "her own," forgetting that they are bought with a price, and are not hers, but God's. In the instruction she chooses for them—in the amusements she permits them—in their whole training, excellent as it may be, she is prone to work at her own hands, that she and they may be exalted, or at the best, that they may be preserved from the dangers and difficulties of the way, and secure the salvation of their souls. Too often does she forget that the chiefest motives of her work must be to bring God glory, and so to teach her children, that they in their turn may glorify Him, each spreading wider the circles

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of influence produced by the work of all, but more especially by the work of a mother.

The mistress would succeed better in her responsible charge—she would attain more easily to the happy medium between discouraging severity and culpable indulgence or indifference—she would not so often fail in attaching to her the hearts of her household—she would have her work better done, and her injunctions more faithfully obeyed, if she remembered that it is part of her appointed service to God, to teach those entrusted to her care to be active servants, useful members of society, and happy Christians.

There would not so often be the coldness and reserve between sister and brother, sister and sister-in-law, and even between sister and sister, which too often mar the peace, or at least the rejoicing confidence of a family circle, were it borne in mind that not a jar, not a clouded brow, not a hasty word, but is dishonouring to His name, and grieving to His heart, who set the people of the earth in families. The solemn consideration of each having to perform to each the will of their mutual God, would soothe many an irritated spirit, and open the bolts and bars of many a closed heart.

If the wife, whose portion too often appears to be one of heart-weariness and disappointment, of hopeless exposure to selfish and unreasonable temper,—would but set herself to her work, forgetting her

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own trials in the earnest desire to glorify God, by rectifying what is amiss in her conjugal relations, and by exerting the sweet influences of woman's affection, bearing and forbearing,—overlooking what is faulty, and cherishing what is good, she would reap her reward in due time. The old simple story of a smile, may not be out of place here. A woman who lived very unhappily with her husband, came to a great divine to ask his counsel. "Always meet your husband with a smile," said the wise man. She followed his advice, and very soon returned to thank him for the blessing of a happy home. Whenever a home landscape is dreary, and its horizon clouded, we believe that it proceeds not so much from the storms of man's petulance and unreasonableness, as because woman has forgotten to draw a sunbeam from the Sun of Righteousness.

In home work it must ever be borne in mind, that it is but a home for a little while, and that the chief object of the Home Missionary is to lead those who now circle the board and the hearth to seek the things that are above, and to form a family and a home in heaven. Often the Lord calls one of a household, and when He has engaged that heart to follow Him, He sends it home to tell what great things the Lord has done. Not always, however, is the report listened to. There may be long years of indifference, and diminished affection, and scorn, and even persecution, but let such a solitary

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one take courage. Let her pray unwearied the prayer of faith; and while never yielding one iota of principle, let her cultivate every iota of tenderness; let her preach silent sermons of example, and speak judicious words of precept. God will yet set her in a family of grace. The light will yet shine upon the hearts that have had light close to them though they acknowledged it not. The prayer for all those life-relations which our Lord himself sanctioned and enjoyed, will yet be answered far more abundantly than we can ask or think.

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VI.

SINGLE WOMEN'S WORK.

"The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord."—1 Cor. vii. 34.
"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."—Prov. xxxi. 30.

"Gather thou not together in a net,
The love, the strength, the work which God hath set
For the wide household of the earth.—Go forth,
Free and unfettered, east, west, south, and north;
No symbol but the inner Cross of Faith,
No rules but what the Lord Jehovah saith;
Go forth, work cheerly, love divinely, raise
Thy lonely heart in songs of joy and praise,
Fulfilling meekly, ere thou hence depart,
The 'Woman's Mission' of thy woman's heart."

In addressing social and home workers, we have hitherto supposed them to occupy distinct "niches" in society,—their work to be fully defined,—and their hearts cheered by love and appreciation. Something more, however, is wanted to fill up the picture. There is a class yet unspoken to—hearts yet unreached. There are those who have no home, or but a solitary one, whose portion in society is peculiarly one of neglect and insignificance. Take woman in all her phases, with one exception, and she is surrounded by a halo of interest and sympathy. The young and the lovely are ever the beloved.

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Many rise up around the wife and the mother, and call her blessed. The aged woman is a link to other times, and her words are listened to with reverence and respect. But from the single woman *d'une certaine âge*, are withheld the interest which it is the foible of her sex to covet, and the sympathy which she more than ever requires. Behind her are the sorrows and severings of the past, before her the waste and desolate places from whence the sunshine has faded.

There are several characteristics, or rather, *pronenesses*, in woman, that render her peculiarly alive to the trials of such a position. Prone to make idols and to find them clay, her first real conviction that there are no idols that will not break, severs her heart from its refuges like a nestless bird. Prone, too, to faint and fail when the trial is petty and ignoble, she suffers acutely from the daily darts of neglect and ridicule, and from the departure of those attractions which once procured attention and consideration. Because she can no longer pour forth the full affluence of prized affection, she takes it for granted that she need bestow no love, and cultivate no sympathy. Much has been said and written upon this subject, and yet we have sometimes felt as if women thus isolated, were still left tossing in a rudderless vessel on a strange ocean,—told, indeed, that land lay near, but unable to distinguish it,—informed of the work before them, without having it clearly defined,—bid

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to be of good cheer, without the tenderness and sympathy which the intricacies of their position peculiarly demand. Our intention is, simply, to offer a few practical and suggestive hints to single women, how they may best put their shoulder to the wheel—their hearts to the work set before them, thus becoming "God's operatives," instead of spending money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not.

For this work, apparently so solitary, many of the elements of social and home work are required. The single woman must, more than any other, struggle against the law of self, for her toil is not for the near and the dear; it may not be met with love, and may fail in calling forth affection; it is for those, only connected with her by the wide, though unseen, family tie, which makes all her brothers and her sisters. Whenever a single woman resolutely devotes herself to the service of God in all its parts, she must become fully assured of her own position—of its strength, its dignity, and its advantages. She must remember that it is her portion,—spoken of by the Apostle with respect and admiration,—to serve the Lord "without carefulness." She must take to herself the encouragement, that even the solitary and the unappreciated has more weight in the social economy of the times than she has hitherto dreamed of; and that though her place and her influence may be as unmarked as the dew of the forest, or as the star of

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the galaxy, yet, if she fulfil not her mission, there will be a diminution of the strength and the light of society.

The mission of the single woman is, in a great measure, to her own sex. There is a reproach hanging over it which she alone can take away. God has bestowed upon woman independent gifts and graces wherewith she may bring glory to Him. Forming so large a portion of society, it would have been inconsistent with His tender wisdom, had He left woman, when independent of man, a useless cipher, a discontented and objectless being. To look attentively upon society, however, it might be supposed that marriage is the great end of life, and that the unmarried have failed in the great mission intended for them. Their name and position are considered legitimate objects of raillery and ridicule, to escape from which many a woman is driven to attempt to "establish herself in life," as it is called—equally degrading, whether successful or the reverse. Whenever a single woman so lives as to rebut these calumnies and disprove this necessity, she is doing a great work; when she is seen to be loved, and occupied, and happy, and respected, she is encouraging her sisterhood to be so likewise. She is a practical warning against the yoke of joyless and uncompanionable marriage, hastily assumed to escape from a position which she has proved capable of being a joyful and useful one. She is an example of the

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needlessness of entering those conventual establishments, half-way between England and Rome, where women, fleeing from their single responsibilities, may set themselves where God has not set them—in families—or, weary of social insignificance, may place themselves upon a pinnacle.

Another portion of social work belongs peculiarly to the "old maid." It is hers to redeem her sisters from the imputation of being peculiarly guilty of "idle words," harsh judgments, and a proverbially strict *surveillance* over others. The heart that does not go out in love, will not feed upon itself alone, it will unlovingly press upon those around. The thoughts that do not perform their holy mission of meditating good for others, will become receptacles of envy, hatred, and uncharitableness—the words that are not sanctified, will speak but of gossip and censoriousness. Every time, therefore, that the single woman, both by precept and example, attempts to stem and sweeten the waters of Marah, and to lead her sisters to perform the gentle charities of life, and to speak of things of beauty, and joy, and goodness, instead of the exaggerated story—the evil motive taken from their own hearts,* imputed and discussed, she is doing no ignoble work for God: she is proving "that there is nothing on earth more tender than a woman's heart when it is the abode of piety."

As we have hinted above, "Thought Work," as it

* "Self-knowledge makes us uncharitable."—MASON.

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may be designated, must be combined with the single women's social vocation. That it *is* a work of no small moment, we may gather from the beautiful prayer of David the king. "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee."—1 Chron. xxix. 18. This is indeed a work for all classes, and for all individuals; but upon whom can it be so forcibly urged as upon those who are emphatically "dwellers alone," and to whom, for long periods, the inner world of thought is their principal scene of action? There is a beautiful and well-known hymn, each verse of which commences with these words,—"Speak gently;" but "*Think* gently," would go more to the root of the evil. How frequently the lonely one brooding over an imaginary insult, or a pardonable omission, instead of being

> "To her neighbours' faults a little blind,
> To her neighbours' virtues ever kind,"

becomes additionally clear-sighted to their faults, and peculiarly blinded to her own! How often the train of exaggerated and censorious thought goes on, gathering material like a snowball, till the heart, which might be warm with love to friend, sister, and neighbour, is cold and hard—the very antipodes to the heart which "thinketh no evil, and is not easily provoked!" Till the chambers of thought are purified, warmed, and illuminated by the Holy Spirit,

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the outward conversation will never be becoming the Gospel, which is so often highly professed; and the thoughtful solitude will never become "the seat of perfect peace," as the Spanish soldiers beautifully called the solitary mountain amidst the South American Llanos, "Paramo de la Suma Paz."

Another work to which the single woman may specially devote herself, and to which she is often proverbially disinclined, is the exercise of love and influence over the young. Pleasant it is to see an "old maid," with perchance no external attraction but the sunshine of a gentle smile, no accomplishment but the music of a sweet tongue, amusing and instructing happy groups of children. Her influence over the youthful of her own sex may be strong; nay, we could imagine it to be, in some respects, greater than the maternal. Frequently, the mother, exhausted by the wear and tear of commonplace cares, or absorbed with the interests of her happy home, forgets the struggles and sorrows of her early life; she is disposed to view lightly the youthful trials of others, and to expect them to be as transient as her own now appear in her eyes. But the woman of no present ties remembers vividly the difficulties and dangers of the past; she can recall every rock and current in the stream of life, and none are better fitted to speak words of hope and warning to the dejected and the struggling. She can take them back to sorrows borne, and disappointments blessed;

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she can tell how great the "boon of suffering" is to woman; she can point to the refuge for the lonely, to the rest for the weary, so that, although none on earth can call her by the sweet name of mother, yet she may say in heaven, "Behold here I am, and the children which Thou hast given me." It is beautiful to see the young and the old, the home-dweller and the isolated, thus clinging to each other, creating a new beauty, and a new affection, and embellishing each other, like the sere leaves and the green of the beechen wood.

Nor is this all,—the single woman has yet another mission. She has a great debt to assist in paying. Although father and brother may be silent in the grave, and the lover of her youth may have passed from her, yet has she an influence to wield over man, a power to "help" him in his career. To use the words of a modern writer:—"'Il n'est pas bon que l'homme soit seul; je lui ferai un aide semblable à lui.' Ceci s'applique à toute femme, non à la femme mariée seulement. Car Eve n'apparait pas seulement ici comme la femme du premier homme, mais encore comme la première femme; et solidaire de tout son sexe, ainsi qu'Adam l'est du nôtre, elle en offre dans sa personne le type et une sorte de miniature. . . . . Honteuse d'elle-même et jalouse de se réhabiliter, la femme ne vivra plus que pour réparer le mal qu'elle a fait à l'homme, en lui prodiguant, avec les consolations qui peuvent adoucir l'amertume présente du

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péché, les avertissements qui peuvent en prévenir l'amertume éternelle."*

It may be objected that this influence requires the aids of youth, beauty, talents, and self-confidence, which the middle-aged and the solitary do not possess. Not so: it requires but the moral youth and beauty bestowed by the graces of the Spirit; it requires but an earnest recognition of the feminine mission and obligation, and of the implanted strength which can alone give a sanctified influence. None are more ready than men to recognise the beauty and dignity of woman's character, thus shining from amidst the shadows of solitude and obscurity—none more ready to be benefited by its influence.

It is obvious that the single woman, with few household cares and family anxieties, and with small restriction upon her time, must have a large amount of special and visible work in her power. The poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the ignorant, have manifest claims upon her leisure; but upon this branch of the subject we shall not enlarge, as it comes under the head of "Special Work" for all. To perform the mission of single women aright, an especial portion of the joy of the Lord is needful, for a higher purpose than that of smoothing their own path and alleviating their own sorrows. It is not enough that the old maid's home shall be one of comfort and content,—it is of real importance to the circle around each,

* "La Femme; Deux discours par Adolphe Monod."

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that they who are experiencing the undefined sadness of departing youth, should learn to "sing as in the days of their youth;"* and that they whose affections have been torn or left lonely by the adverse circumstances of life, should be seen rejoicing because they have fixed them upon the home and the affections above.

* Hosea ii 15.

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VII.

WAITING WORK.

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."—PSALM xxvii. 14.

"God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."
MILTON'S SONNETS.

IT is always easier to act than to wait; it is pleasanter to the natural heart, full of its own energy and excitement, to do a great action than a small one, or apparently to do nothing at all. The men of war, who, like the war-horse scented the battle afar off, found it a hard service to walk around Jericho seven times seven. It must have been difficult for the Israelites, on the banks of the Red Sea, to stand still and see the salvation of God, instead of rushing upon the hosts of Pharaoh. The Syrian captain was wroth when with no pain or trouble he had but to wash in the waters of Jordan. Yet the one species of service is as needful as the other. The strength and courage will come to those only who have waited

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for the good time of their Giver; and most of the Lord's servants who are called to work that is seen, have gone through a course of waiting discipline, often unsuspected and unseen.

Dear, anxious, somewhat impatient believer, to whom we have before addressed a few homely words, bear with us yet a little, while we suggest that another part of the work which you have to do at present may be a waiting work. You need such discipline far more than the sinless angels, who yet stand and wait, joyfully and unrepiningly, and in so doing equally serve their Master. You require to be taught humility. If you were an open, active labourer in the Lord's vineyard, observed of all observers, you would perhaps become puffed up with pride, and you would say, "Oh, well done!" as it happened to Bernard, into whose ear, even while preaching, Satan whispered "Bene fecisti Bernarde." So you must needs learn that all manner of active service can go on upon the earth without your aid,—that God has workers in abundance ready for His purposes; and that when He chooses you to work for Him, it is because of His good pleasure and tenderness, not because He cannot do without you. You require to be taught patience. All eagerness and excitement, you would rush forward impatient to be employed, and perform the Lord's work in a hurried and imperfect manner, peculiarly distasteful to Him who loveth to "have all things done in order;" so He

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wills a period of patient quiet waiting and restraint for you. You require to be taught child-like submission to your Father's will. Perhaps you have attained to so much of it as to lay your hand upon your mouth, and your mouth in the dust, during times of chastening; and in difficulty and perplexity, you can cry unhesitatingly, "My Father, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth!" But you are not equally submissive when you desire to do active work for God, and He will not allow it. You feel as if it were a duty to be impatient, and so God must check this unchild-like spirit, and bring you into subjection to His will in *all* things. Then, above all, you require to wait for greater degrees of that sanctification which is to fit you for active work. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." A blessed way of spending the waiting time,—thus uniting the warfare work,—scarcely less blessed than the sinless services of the angels, who have never required to yearn and struggle after holiness.

Frequently the "waiting" is in the chamber of sickness—in "the fires" of bodily suffering. Very trying is it to the Christian, when life and activity have been throbbing high in his heart, to be laid upon a bed of languishing; when he has been longing to prove that he is a living branch of the fruitful Vine to feel himself but a dry twig,—a withered

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leaf. Even more trying than a season of decided and dangerous illness, is the protracted time of languor, and weakness, and weariness,—when usefulness seems forbidden by the jarred and thrilling nerves, giving greater intensity to the irritating self-condemnation, and injurious struggles to escape from the hand of the Lord, so common in such a position. Be still, oh weak, and nervous, and restless sufferer! consider that the Lord Jesus knoweth thy frame, and remembereth that thou art dust, for He "was made like unto His brethren." Others may weary of thy incapacity, but He never does; others may forget their own past sufferings, but every pang is still fresh in His memory.

"Thou who didst sit on Jacob's well
The weary hour of noon;
The languid pulses thou canst tell,
The nerveless spirit tune."

He is proving what of faith and submission is in thy heart; and oh, disappoint Him not! let Him find a patient spirit amidst the languor and nervousness, a waiting heart upon the wearisome couch.

Frequently, also, the "waiting" is amidst the depths of heavy chastening and sore bereavement. When the heart has been well-nigh broken with its yearning for a removed prop and fibre, it is best that the time of healing and binding up should be spent "alone with Jesus," sitting at His feet and waiting for His strength. It is not needful, however, that the waiting season in any of these cases should be

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altogether inactive. The patience and sympathy displayed to others—the meek submission, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,"—the evident thought upon their desire for the glory of God, may all bring forth fruit unto everlasting life.

"Those souls which, whether light or grave,
Faith emerges sent down to thee. Do thou
With unerring resolve him. . . . Grief should be,
Like joy, multiple, sprouble, subtle—
Refreshing, climbing, rising, making free,
Aware to compass small troubles; to commend
Those thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end."*

During this season there must also be a good hope within you. Without hope you cannot wait and cannot wait; without hope you will sink down contented with your inaction. Cultivate then, an earnest, loving, active principle of hope, which is in itself work. It will be the salt that preserves the grace of patience from degenerating into indolence. It will be the light that illumines what might else be a dark place. Hope against hope, wait against weariness, and you will yet be chosen and meet for active work here, and for the inheritance hereafter.

* Aubrey de Vere.

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VIII.

PREPARATORY WORK.

"Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house."—PROV. xxiv. 27.

. . . "All the means of action—
The shapeless masses—the materials,
Lie everywhere about us. What we need
Is the celestial fire to change the flint
Into transparent crystal, bright and clear."
LONGFELLOW.

LICHENS and mosses and decayed leaves are needful to prepare a soil for the trees of the forest; so they who are to be called to some special work, are often led by a way that they know not, to some special preparation; and work that may seem unnecessary and unimportant, proves to be the under soil from whence the fruitful tree is to spring up. We knew a lady who had her mind much turned to the study of German. In her case it seemed a waste of time, and was met with some opposition and discouragement. Still she persevered, and it was not till after she had conquered the difficulties of her favourite language, that an unthought of door was opened, and she became the wife of a missionary to the Jews in Germany. Without the probability of so pro-

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minent a leading of Providence, there are many things that may be cultivated by the Christian in the waiting interval, which he will find useful as auxiliaries when called into active service. Knowledge of all kinds comes under this head. History, languages, logic, mathematics, and the physical sciences, may all be useful in interesting and influencing the young,—in enabling us to "give a reason for the hope that is in us," and in confuting the sophistries of those who, destitute of this "good hope," strive to destroy it in others. Researches into the hidden works of God, as well as into those which clothe the earth with beauty, awakening praise and admiration of their Creator in ourselves, fill up many an idle hour, and create many a busy and blessed thought in the minds of others,—while the well-stored memory,—the cultivated taste,—the quick observation,—the keen discrimination into heart and character, if not concealed in the folded napkin, may take their honourable place as part of the prepared material, from which are to be fashioned the tools of the vineyard and the weapons of the armory.

The Christian, therefore, who prays for a blessing upon his studies, and who earnestly desires to consecrate every talent, need not fear that he is wasting time when he is solving the mathematical problem,—when he is tracing the physical laws of the storm, and the glacier, the flood, and the geyser,—when he is classifying the fronds of the fern, and grouping the

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stamens of the flower,—when he is learning the languages of the earth, and numbering the stars of the heavens. Although he may not for a time be able to see the ways and means, yet if his preparatory work be done in faith, nothing doubting, it will yet be turned to good account in the service of God. Only let him take heed that his work degenerate not into self-seeking and self-applause; let him watch for every opportunity of bringing therewith glory to God, and let him remember that without prayer, such things have been, and may be again, as idols in the way. "Apply and rely" is the only safe motto.

Literary work is not always preparatory only, it may even when of very humble kind be important work for God. Is there nothing, however small, that you can do with your pen and your knowledge? Is there no little tract to be written? Is there no homely volume which might reach some hearts and find entrance into some homes? Is there no translation which might give to a good thought wings like a bird to fly from its own land and its own tongue? Remember the brief yet comprehensive advice which Sir William Jones received from his mother, "TRY." Search and see for yourselves what you can do. "She hath done what she could," is world-wide encouragement. Avoid the false humility of slothful self-depreciation on the one hand; and the presumption of self-dependent knowledge on the other.

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Work for God and not for yourself, and the preparatory work will soon be found to assume its distinct place in the vineyard of God. Most of our readers are acquainted with the Memoirs of Mary Jane Graham, a remarkable example of sanctified genius, and attainments. The following "Prayer before study" was found among her papers after her death, and it seems so applicable to our subject, that we are tempted to transcribe it. No preparatory study will answer its end without a similar dedication, and dependence upon Divine teaching.

"I desire to thank thee, my God and Father in Christ Jesus, for this and every other opportunity of improvement which Thou hast given me! Enable me to receive it with thanksgiving, and sanctify it to me by the Word of God and prayer. Oh let me know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified; and other things *just so far* as may be for my good and thy glory, and *no farther*. I would mourn before Thee, the base ingratitude with which I have hitherto abused my time and talents by loving thy gifts more than Thee, and seeking myself, not Thee in them. Now I bring all my things to Thee; for they are not mine but thine own. Take that *accursed thing self out of them all*, and condescend to use them for thy glory. . . . Holy Lord God the Spirit! who dividest unto every man severally as thou wilt, *bless such of my studies, and in such a degree*, as may be most to thy glory. If it be thy will, prepare me by

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them for the work to which I desire thou wouldst call and separate me. I commit this work to which I would devote myself into thy hands. Prosper it or not as Thou seest good. . . . Even so, Holy Spirit, for the sake of Thy great mercies in Christ Jesus, to whom, with Thee and the Father, be all the honour, all the praise, and all the glory, now and for ever.—AMEN."

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IX.

DESULTORY WORK.

"Here a little, and there a little."—Is. xxviii. 10.
"Who hath despised the day of small things?"—Zech. iv. 10.

"A spark is a molecule of matter, yet may it kindle the world:
Vast is the mighty ocean, but drops have made it vast.
Despise not thou a small thing, either for evil or for good;
Commit thy trifles unto God, for to Him nothing is trivial;
And it is but the littleness of men that seeth no greatness in trifles.
All things are infinite in parts, and the moral is as the material,
Neither is anything vast, but it is compacted of atoms.
. . . . If pestilence stalk through the land, ye say, this is God's doing.
Is it not also His doing, when an aphis creepeth on a rosebud?
. . . . A thing is great or little only to a mortal's thinking,
And happy and wise is the man to whose thought existeth not a trifle."

Martin Tupper.

During the waiting season, while God withholds active work from the believer, He often gives little services to do for Him, which we venture to class under the head of Desultory Work,—work that may happen one day, and not another, "here a little, and there a little;" and which is often left undone, just because it *is* desultory, and apparently so small in its results. Many, however, are now in heaven who would never have known the way there had it not been for the religious book lent by a neighbour; or the persuasive letter penned in a distant land; or the awakening sermon listened to at the entreaty of

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a Christian friend; or the tract found in a railway station; or the short, sudden, but heaven-heard and heaven-answered prayer; or the timely word spoken by the way-side; or the hymn lovingly taught to the little child; or the striking anecdote treasured up and repeated; or the pointed text of Scripture that went into the heart sharpened as a two-edged sword.

The very crumbs of work that fall from the Master's hand,—the fragments that remain from what He gives His strong ones,—the "corners of time" snatched from the more secular work of every day, ought to be treasured by the Christian. They whose time is much at the disposal of others, or who are much in the habit of travelling from place to place, and therefore peculiarly fitted for a "wayside witnessing for Christ," (as it is called in an admirable little manual for travellers,*) need to consider deeply the importance of seizing all opportunities for desultory work. How well it would be if each in going through the world were to remember what the old writer said of life;—that it consisted of two heaps, a large one of sorrow, and a small one of happiness, and whoever carried the very smallest atom from the one to the other, did God a service; much more those who are instrumental in any way in leading or helping one precious soul from the pit of eternal misery, to the home of eternal joy. Let us take heed, then, to be

* A Word for the Way; or, Hints to Travellers and Tourists.

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faithful in the smallest things, or how can we expect to rule over ten cities?—(Luke xix. 17.) Let us watch over the little cloud, from which, though no larger than a man's hand, great showers of blessing may be poured down. Let us nurture the tiny seed, which may spring up into the branching tree; for though our words and deeds may seem slight and powerless things, yet

> "No act falls fruitless; none can tell
> How vast its power may be,
> Nor what results unfolded dwell
> Within it silently."

Like the rain drop of a million years ago, whose fossil steps are traced in the sandstone, so will the smallest of our actions leave traces behind for good or evil—if not visible in time—yet clearly visible in Eternity.

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X.

PRAISING WORK.

"Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee."—DEUT. xxvi. 11.

"For what shall I praise thee, my God and my King,
For what blessings the tribute of gratitude bring?
For the spirits which heightened my days of delight,
And the slumbers that fell on my pillow by night?
For this I should praise thee; but if only for this,
I should leave half untold the donation of bliss.
I thank thee for sickness, and sorrow, and care,
For the thorns I have gathered, the anguish I bear,
For nights of anxiety, watchings, and tears,
A present of pain, a perspective of fears.
I praise thee, I bless thee, my King and my God,
For the good and the evil thy hand hath bestowed."

"A cheerful expecter of the best, hath a fountain of joy within him;
Ask for good and have it; for thy Friend would see thee happy."

MARTIN TUPPER.

LIKE the disagreeable Christian, the gloomy Christian is an anomaly in grace. What a sad spectacle! a Christian who makes the young feel old, the old feel older, the sad feel sadder,—who confirms the worldly in their worldliness! Christians, however, are never gloomy because they are too religious, as the world alleges, but because they are not religious enough. That is a striking combination in 2 Tim. iii. 2, "*unthankful,—unholy;*" and it will ever be

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found that the more thankfulness, the more holiness, the more happiness. Rise up, then, oh believer! from your despondency; emerge from the dark shadow; do no more dishonour to your joy-loving Lord. Your heart ought to be as the glad welling fount in the midst of the fresh green grass. Let this rejoicing, fertilizing work be yours; it is the portion of the vineyard most neglected by the Lord's labourers, and yet it is of exceeding value, for "he that offereth praise glorifieth God." An eloquent modern writer has spoken to us of "the duty of delight,"* and it is a duty peculiarly appropriate to the Christian, upon whom all rich gifts and sweet influences are showered by a reconciled Father. Beautiful are the white and crimson clouds that "lie cradled near the setting sun;" joyous the lark's melody, that riseth on the wings of the morning from the earth to the heavens; lovely the deep blue shadows cast by the golden sunlight; fresh and fragrant the flower of the valley, the green leaf of the forest; soothing the ripple-music of the river, and the chiming of the sea upon the shore. Go forth, then, amongst all that is rich and beautiful in nature, and thank Him, the beloved Son, by whom every bright, and lovely,

* "They tell us often to meditate in the closet, but they send us not, like Isaac, into the fields at even; they dwell on the duty of self-denial, but they exhibit not the duty of delight. . . . It is not possible for a Christian man to walk across so much as a rood of the natural earth, with mind unagitated and rightly poised, without receiving strength and hope from some stone, leaf, flower, or sound, nor without a sense of a dew falling upon him out of the sky."—MODERN PAINTERS.

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and melodious thing was created. Go forth, also, amongst the treasures of art,—the forms of sculptured beauty,—the harmonies of music,—the rich colouring of the life-like canvass,—the "marble letters and granite pages" of old stately architecture, and lift up your heart in praise to Him who hath put wisdom into the hearts of the wise-hearted, like unto the wisdom of Bezaleel and Aholiab.—(Ex. xxxi. 1-11.) Go forth, also, amongst those whom God hath given to love you and to be beloved, and for every soul-thrilling glance, for every kindly sympathy and tender word, for all "sweet counsel," and precious unity, thank Him without whose love all earthly sympathy would have been but a name, all earthly tenderness would have been but as the foolishness of idolatry. Go back in memory to the days of "long ago,"—recall the wind tempered to the shorn lamb,—the strong wave of temptation breasted,—the hurtful thing, to which your soul clung, removed out of your path,—the right way chosen for you, instead of the wrong way which you had chosen for yourself,—the measure of affliction meted out which you required,—the friends selected whom your soul needed,—the breathing times granted which your tried and struggling spirit yearned for;—oh, thank your God for it all. He it is who has been your guide through the waste howling wilderness, and the brightener of all green places with His smile. Go deep within the chambers of your soul;

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see there the bright hope smiling, and the light shining, and the new heart struggling, and the old sins staggering and falling; listen there to the voice which whispers all tender things of the love "unspeakable;" behold there the holy and adorned temple, rising stone by stone on the ruins of the chambers of imagery; meditate upon the bright, sinless, victorious future, upon the palm and crown which you shall cast at the feet of the Saviour, upon the new song which you shall sing to the slain Lamb, who *so* loved your soul even unto the death; and then thank Him, though breathlessly and voicelessly, for the great things He has done for you, who have done such small things for Him.

There is a beautiful old legend or "parable," which Lord Lindsay quotes in "Christian Art," under the head of Christian Mythology. "Beyonde the sea was a noble ladie, on whose house alleway the sone shone on the day, and on the nyghte the mone. Of this many men mervayled. Atte last the fame of this come to the Byshop, a worthy man; ande he wente for to see here, hopyng that she was of grete penaunce in clothinge, or in mete, or in othere thinges. And when he come, he saw here alleway mery ande glede. The Bishope saide, 'Dame, what ete ye?' She answeride and saide, that dyverse metes and delicate. Then he asked if she vsed the hayre? She sayde, 'Nay.' After this the Byshope mervaylede, that Gode wolde shew so grete mervaylle for such a

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woman. And when he hade taken his leve of the ladie, ande was gone his way, he thought he wolde aske here more of anothere thinge, and wente againe to here and said, 'Love ye not meikle Jhesu Criste?' She said, 'Yis, I love hyme, for he is alle my love; for when I thinke on his sweetnesse, I may not withhold myself for gladnesse and myrthe that I ever fele in hyme.'"

Some hearts are by nature full of false sentiment and morbid feeling. They shrink from being happy, as if it were uninteresting and commonplace, and, strange as it may appear, they greatly prefer being miserable; they delight in being the heroes, or more frequently the heroines of interest and sympathy from others, and of their own day-dreams of romance; and this strong tendency is often seen even after the heart is renewed. Others are afraid of being happy, lest, as they say, they should suffer for it after, as if God grudged His creatures happiness, and took hard compensation for their enjoyments! Instead, therefore, of leaving to-morrow as well as to-day in the keeping of their wise God, they darken the present with the shadows of the future, and die the many deaths of the coward. Others are afraid of being happy, for a different reason. They look so much to themselves and their sins, and so little to Christ and His righteousness, that they dare not be happy and assured Christians, lest they may be, or may seem to be presumptuous. Such melancholy temperaments

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forget that the more they joy in God, the more cause for joy He will give them; that the more they praise Him for strength, the more strength they will receive; that the more they thank Him even for the wish to conquer temptation, the more He will stand by them, and cause them to triumph for His name's sake. They forget that God's nature is a joyful one; that the element in which He lives is one of joy; and that when He gave men a new nature, it was part of His own joyful one. They forget that the showing forth of God's praise will be a work and a witness for Him, in the midst of a joyless and thankless generation. There was a world of significance in the answer of the half imbecile Christian who was asked by men of wisdom and experience, how it was that he rejoiced more than they? "Just because I am nothing, and you are something;

> I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
> And Jesus Christ is all in all."

If the trusting single-hearted Christian is not happy, who dares to be? If the possessor of a rich demesne may not rejoice in his prospects, how can they rejoice, who have no abiding treasures laid up in earth or heaven? Of whom ought it to be said but of the Christian, that he is "a man of cheerful yesterdays, and confident to-morrows?"

"Resolve, Christian," says Gurnall, "to enclose some time from all worldly suitors, wherein thou mayest every day, if possible, at least take a view of

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the most remarkable occurrences that have passed between God and thee. First ask thy soul what takings it hath had that day, what mercies heaven hath sent in to thee; and do not when thou hast asked the question, like Pilate, go out; but stay till thy soul has made report of God's gracious dealings with thee. Yea, while thou art viewing these fresh mercies, telling over this new coin, hot out of the mint of God's bounty, ancient mercies they will come crowding in upon thee, and call for a place in thy thoughts, and tell thee what God hath done for thee months and years ago. . . . There is a great treasure of mercy always in the Christian's hands, and conscience is oft calling the Christian to take the account, and see what God has done for him; but seldom it is he can find time to tell his mercies over; and is it any wonder that such should go behind hand in their spiritual estate, who take no more notice what the gracious dealings of God are with them? How can he be thankful that seldom thinks of what he receives?"

"Bless the Lord then, oh my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Let not one be struck from thy memory—let not gratitude for the old mercies be absorbed in the enjoyment of the new. Neither let the work be a selfish one. Praise God for His tender dealing with others; and if there be any whose tongues utter no words of praise, but whose language is, "Who shall shew us any good?" teach them to

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distinguish and appreciate the good already given—the sweet drops mingled in their cup; be to them a mouth of praise—shed upon them a gleam of your rejoicing—follow the example of Him who was light amidst darkness, and be

"A sunshine in the shady place."

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XI.

SPECIAL WORK.

"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." —2 Cor. ix. 6-8.

"Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thy hand;
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
Broad cast it o'er the land.

"Beside all waters sow,
The high-way furrows stock,
Drop it where thorns and thistles grow,
Scatter it on the rock.

"Thou canst not toil in vain,
Cold, heat, and moist, and dry,
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garners in the sky.

"And duly shall appear
In beauty, verdure, strength,
The tender blade, the stalk, the ear,
And the full corn at length."

James Montgomery.

Our purpose has indeed failed, if we have led one soul to remain satisfied with small duties and easy work, instead of pressing on to higher degrees of service. We believe, however, that those who are most zealous in performing the humblest labours of the

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vineyard, will ever be found most able and desirous, when the Master calls, of going forth early to sow the seed, to plant the vine, to twine the young tendril, to watch the tender grape and the budding forth of the green pomegranates. It must ever be remembered, that the most patient, cheerful, childlike submission to the trial of being debarred from the active work for which the soul longs, is quite compatible with a watching for every opening, a seizing of every opportunity, a knocking at every door, along with earnest prayer, to be permitted to employ every faculty in the service of God. When the Christian is brought to this willing, yet waiting spirit, he will not remain long on the threshold of the vineyard; for soon will the joyful summons be heard, "Enter in, the Master hath need of thee." He hath need of thee perhaps in his nurseries and his sheepfolds. Sabbath after Sabbath there are little tender plants and wandering branches to be trained into trees of the Lord's planting, that He may be glorified, or little wayward lambs to be guided to the Good Shepherd, and laid upon His steady shoulders. He hath need of thee, perhaps, in His mission-house, to encourage the bearers of glad tidings to far off kindreds and tongues, to give to them of your substance, to aid them by your activity. He hath need of thee, perhaps, in His prisons; He wants to be visited by thee, to receive a cup of cold water from thee,—to have the captive led to Him who leadeth captivity captive,

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and breaketh asunder stronger chains than those of brass and iron. He hath need of thee, perhaps, in the lane and the alley, the cellar and the garret. He hath silver and gold to give out of thy abundance to the hungry and thirsty and wretched. He hath kind words to speak by thee, and tender love to bestow on those who have known no kindness, who have imagined no love, and for whose souls no man hath cared. He hath need, perchance, of thy pen and thy intellect; there are scorners to be rebuked, and sophists to be confuted, in "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn." He demands of thee, perhaps, the talent of thy rank and influence, to be a light shining and burning in the midst of thick darkness, to be a missionary in high places, where the accredited message, where the tabard of the herald, would find no entrance. Go forth, then, rejoicing to thy work; linger not a step, for the way is short; lose not an hour, for the night cometh when no man can work.

It has been said by one who once appeared "almost a Christian," "Let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen unto day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: *Do the duty which lies nearest thee*, which thou knowest to be a duty, thy second duty will already have become clearer."* And it is true,

* Carlyle's Sartor Resartus.

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that while Christians work not *to be* saved, but because they *are* saved, yet there is much spiritual benefit to be obtained for our own souls by active work for God. He that doeth His will shall know of the doctrine.—John vii. 17. Let the Christian who is mourning over his ignorance, his doubts, his want of experience, become a diligent worker, and he will find that knowledge will flow in upon his soul like a river, and that he shall be satisfied with the riches of understanding that are in Christ Jesus. "He that watereth others, shall be watered also himself." Perhaps the believer is enveloped in thick, dark clouds, or pursued by fiery darts of temptation, till his soul is ready to despair. Let him work, let him strain every nerve in the service of his Master, and he will forget *not* his sinfulness, *not* his weakness, but he will forget his despair—he will have no time for his unbelief; there will be no room for Satan's temptations in his busy hands. While watering others, his own soul will become as a watered garden, filled with all manner of spices, and pleasant fruits, and lovely flowers. It is true that at first he will not bear the seed-basket so joyfully as those who are basking in the sunshine of God's countenance. There will be weeping because of weariness, weeping because of weakness, weeping because of unworthiness; so much the better. The precious seed will rise up all the goodlier and the greener, because of the spring showers before the summer sunshine.—Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6.

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In this work the instruments placed in our hands by the Father and the Master, are of no uncertain edge; and sharpened by the Holy Spirit, there is no fear of their operation being inefficient, for God himself works not only in us, and by us, but more gracious still, He works *with* us,*—while the holy angels are our helpers and fellow-servants.† Confidently, then, let us take courage and be strong in the Lord. Joyfully let us plant in all soils and sow beside all waters. Let us scatter truths, which, like the seeds of the bread-fruit tree, may take root and flourish, after being long tossed on the stormy waters.

Before concluding this chapter, we must allude to a subject prominently brought forward in the fascinating periodical literature of the day. We mean the injudicious, ill-timed, and ostentatious performance of the duties belonging to "special work," by the class often satirically characterized as "good ladies." The sketches of character to which we refer‡ —though broadly caricatured—contain much painful and useful truth. Extensively read, however, by those only whose prejudices need no such stimulant—whose perceptions of the existing evil are more vivid than of the attempted good,—and unread by those to whom they might speak a word of warning, they are more likely to prove injurious than beneficial. That the evil rebuked and satirized is a real and

* Mark xvi. 20. † Rev. xxii. 9.
‡ Bleak House, by Charles Dickens, Esq.

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extensive one, is, nevertheless, abundantly evident. Twofold in its aspect, it is not only hurtful to those immediately affected by it, but the eddying circles reach many who are thus led to look sceptically upon the real good, and to conclude that active outward work is incompatible with the domestic calling. It is certain that this special activity ceases to be the appointed work for any, where it necessarily interferes with home duties. The exciting and conspicuous doings of the committee-room—the missionary collectorship—the secretary's desk—the abolitionist's appeal—the prison visitation, cannot be considered the vocation of those who have husbands requiring in vain their sympathy and companionship at home—who have neglected children to be taught and attracted to religion—whose servants are sick, or idle, or unruly—whose next-door dwellers stand in need of unostentatious but efficient aid. The falseness of this position for a Christian worker, is frequently aggravated by an almost unconscious mixture of selfishness and parade—the silver is tarnished with dross—the wine mixed with water. Not only is the domestic routine neglected, but the important principle contained in the command—"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," is forgotten and disobeyed. Religious newsmongers and philanthropic gossips, are made acquainted with the doings both of the right hand and the left; while the oneness of aim, the holiness, dignity, and symmetry of God's

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service, are marred by injudicious and partial performance, and debased by self-exaltation.

While deploring the evil, however, let us not mistake the true remedy. While doing the one set of duties, let not the other be left undone. There is no reason why wives and mothers should be debarred from "the special work" for which they may have a peculiar talent. Only, let their primary duties be performed in their due order; let them seek a double portion of grace, that they may be gifted with single hearts, steadfast hands, and wise heads. Let them make it more clearly evident that they are united to that "Green Fir Tree,"—that Living Vine—whose branches shall never drop their blossoms, nor shed their fruit at untimely seasons. Let the activity that is *for* Christ be *from* Christ, and it will never be undue and misplaced; let them deny themselves in *making time*—snatching it from their indolence and their amusements; let them deny themselves, by retiring as much as is possible from the applause and the excitement frequently attendant upon their good works; but, above all, let them deny themselves in these very works, so as cheerfully to give up the missionary meeting—the school superintendence—the prison or district rounds, when there is a prior claim to humbler work at home. Let not the stigma be cast upon the religious profession, of working everywhere save in its own sphere, but let it be shewn to the world, that both may be accomplished by those

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who, weak and foolish and sinful in themselves, receive strength and wisdom and righteousness from Him in whom dwelleth all fulness; that, like the work of the Apostles, which began, but tarried not at Jerusalem, the work begun at home may spread itself well and wisely in ever-widening circles.

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XII.

PRAYING WORK.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me."—ISAIAH xlv. 11.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."—JOHN xv. 7.

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make;
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take;
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all—the distant and the near—
Stands forth, in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel; how weak! We rise; how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong;
Or others, that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?"

TRENCH.

PRAYER is the life of all work. Without prayer, work would be as useless as the suit of armour without the living man within it,—or as the richly-carved casket from whence the gems had been stolen,—or as the scabbard apart from the sharpened steel. Without prayer, "every-day work" would be but a dull round of uncongenial tasks. Without prayer, "social work" would degenerate into worldliness on the one

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hand, or weariness of the flesh and spirit upon the other. Without prayer, "home work" would be but another form of self-intrenchment. Without prayer, "warfare" weapons would dim with rust, and there would be a turning back in the day of battle.—Ps. lxxviii. 9. Without prayer, "waiting work" would become sloth and self-indulgence; "preparatory work" would turn into intellectual idolatry, and "desultory work" would be aimless and spasmodic. Without prayer, there could be no "praising work," or it would be but the effusion of the natural heart, praising nature but not God, admiring beauty but not its Creator. Without prayer, "special work" would be nought but the "splendid sins" of the self-righteous, and the self-justifying. Without prayer, the missionary in his hut beneath the banyans would be weak as other men. Without prayer, the Jew of Tarsus would have been but a blind leader of the blind Gentiles. Without prayer, the strengthening angel would not have appeared to the Agonized of Gethsemane.

Nor is prayer the medium only through which we receive spiritual blessings and consolations,—an opening of the heavens, through which, like the Captives of Chebar, we may see visions of God;—nor is it only the salt which preserves from corruption,—the throb of life in the living work; it is in itself work—the noblest, the highest, the most successful; for it moves God himself to work; it commands His

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hand! This wonderful work is not limited in its sphere; it is suited to all situations and all capacities. Many there are who cannot work what man calls work, but none there are who cannot pray. The lonely dweller among the mountains, with no neighbours save the eagles of the corrie, with no listeners save the winds of the heavens, can pray; and the dry bones of the far-off world may become a living army through his lonely prayers. The pale silent sufferer on the couch of pain can pray; and by her voiceless petitions may be hastened the outpouring of the Spirit, the coming of the Kingdom. Far away may we be from those whom we love better than life; powerless may we be to guide them, to watch over them, to comfort them; but we can rouse up for them an untiring Watcher, an unchanging Lover, an unfailing Comforter—we can pray. Agonizing may be our fears for precious souls hurrying on the broad road to destruction—our words fall unheeded, our anxieties are laughed to scorn, our presence is avoided. Can we do nothing? We can pray! We can call down upon them the mighty Spirit, the resistless Pleader; we can bring the Saviour to them, though they will not go to the Saviour. An old author writing upon intercessory prayer, tells the following story:—"It was a law amongst the Romans, when in the field, that any person found near the emperor's tent at night should suffer death. One night a soldier was found holding in his hand a

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petition. The sentence was about to be executed, when the emperor called out—'If the petition is for himself, let him die; if for another, spare his life.' It was found to be for two of his fellow-soldiers who had incurred the displeasure of their monarch, and the lives of all three were saved. Was this office of charity so pleasing to an earthly prince, as to induce him to dispense with a law for its sake? Oh, how acceptable, then, to our merciful God to intercede for our fellow-sinners!"

It might seem at first sight as if this work were an easy one, and that the slothful heart might take refuge in it when averse to any other; but it is not so, either as work for ourselves or others. It is easy, indeed, to offer the prayers of the hypocrite and the formalist, morning and evening, at noon, and at midnight, sending words up to heaven, while the thoughts remain on the earth.* It is easy to stand in the weekly prayer meeting, or kneel in the daily service, and to wander the while contentedly upon the mountains of vanity. It is easy to ask a hasty blessing for a friend, or for a work, and then forget to expect the answer—to press the petition. But it is very hard to pray so that Satan shall tremble.† It is hard to pray so that God by His pledged word must answer us. It is hard to pray while seemingly

* "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below,
Words without thoughts can ne'er to heaven go."

† "For Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

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the heavens are of brass, and there is neither sign nor voice, and yet to take no denial. It is hard to pray and to be resigned to the answer, even to the breaking of idols, the crucifying of affections. It is hard to pray for "everything,"—to be "careful for nothing," and to realize that in no other way can we obtain daily strength, wisdom, and success. It is hard to pray in all sincerity, as true men speaking to Him who is the truth. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira is oft repeated in prayer,—we keep something back,—we spare some darling treasure,—we make the reservation, "Lord, not yet." There was once a little child who understood somewhat of the nature of sincere prayer; he refused to pray one evening; his mother reproved him, but to no purpose—he would not pray; he was asked his reason, and weeping bitterly, he said, "My sparrow dee'd last night, and I couldna say 'Thy will be done.'"—Yes! it is hard to pray, but we make it harder. We come as subjects to a king, but we come not as children to a Father,—we come as slaves to an overseer, but we come not as brethren to an Elder Brother. We are afraid of irreverence in prayer; or we think there is little need of telling God what He knows already; or we dread being selfish in our petitions, and so we do not come to particulars in prayer. We confess our sin in a general way, but we do not detail its sufferings, its temptations, and its aggravations. We pray for our friends, and we implore

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the Divine guidance upon our way, but we do not specify times and seasons, circumstances, sorrows, idols, fears, names, cares, and reasons; and thus we have so few answers to prayer—so many heavy and unrelieved burdens, often made up of trifles, like rocks of microscopic shells.

Yes! it is hard to pray; but, blessed be God, we are not left to pray alone. There is one who will put within us the courage of sons,—the confidence of daughters; One who is the Teacher of prayer, loving to teach, and loving the taught, and who is the helper of our infirmities; One who ever liveth to present our petitions, that they may be answered for His own sake. Oh, then, Christian, pray and work, work and pray! Prayer is the beginning of work, prayer is the end of work, prayer is work itself.

"Were not my watchings another's care,
Long since I had wearied and ceased from prayer;
Watchman of Israel, watch over me,
Pity if wearied and faint I be,
Wake me with new and reviving power,
Say to me, Canst thou not watch one hour?"

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XIII.

HOMELY HINTS ABOUT WORK.

"Let all things be done in order."—1 Cor. xiv. 40.

"Do what thou dost, as if the earth were heaven,
And that thy last day were the judgment day;
When all's done, nothing's done."

KINGSLEY.

"A wise man scorneth nothing, be it never so small or homely,
For he knoweth not the secret laws that may bind it to great effects."

MARTIN TUPPER.

THE law of order requires to be duly combined with the law of work, else we shall walk at haphazard, hindering our own usefulness, and irritating the feelings of others. There may be much diligence, and faith, and zeal, without order, but there can be only partial success; nor without it can there be a thorough spirit of obedience, for it is one of the commands of God, "Let all things be done in order." It appears to be a thing of easy attainment, belonging to the essentially commonplace and uninteresting elements of work; hence is it so frequently neglected, and any admonitions on the subject generally received with weariness, if not contempt. Those, however, who have known the sadness of failure in their work, without any apparent cause,—unless it be the want of due

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regularity and design,—will not disdain to listen to a few brief and homely words, and to such we say—

Be methodical!—The very idea of "living by rule" is frightful to many, especially to those who pique themselves on possessing something of "genius," which they consider incompatible with method. Now, if genius has accomplished much in the world without method, doubtless it would have accomplished much more with it; while those who have neither genius nor method, will find themselves but in a melancholy plight. When we rise in the morning to the light and the work of a new day,—unless we have some rules of action,—unless we know what we have to do, and when it is to be done,—unless we have the hours parcelled out in some measure so that we need not waste large intervals in arranging and discussing, we run great risk of having our duties ill balanced,—giving undue space to the work that we like, and crushing into a corner the work that we do not like. While we allot, as far as possible, the different duties for the different hours, it is well to leave some but partially filled, to meet the emergencies of unexpected claims,—reserving some lighter employments for these "corners of time." The lesson that we may learn from the following resolution of Mrs. Fletcher of Madely, as recorded in her diary, will be found useful by those who for the first time are attempting to cultivate method.—"I will endeavour to lay out my time by rule, that I may know each

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hour what ought to be done; nevertheless I will cheerfully submit to have these rules broken or overturned, whenever the providence of God thinks fit so to do."

Be punctual!—Punctuality is essential to method, but we make a distinction between the two, because with some degree of growing method, as regards our own duties, we may yet be heedless regarding the work and the method of others. Time is a gift, and if we choose to undervalue and mislay our own portion, we certainly have no right to appropriate what belongs to those around us. Yet when we forget to keep an appointment,—when we arrive an hour too late for the work to be done in concert with others,—we have not only defrauded God of His service, but we have robbed our neighbours of hours that might have been usefully occupied. In some cases this is tantamount to the crime of stealing silver and gold,—for to many time is money. Charlotte Elizabeth said that by the want of punctuality in her friends interrupting her literary work, she had lost hundreds of pounds; still more is this true in the case of artisans and tradespeople, to whom want of punctuality is positive injustice; and yet how little is this social sin watched and striven and prayed against!

Be thorough!—Do not aim at more than you have strength or opportunity for; but what you attempt, do well: it is better to do one duty thoroughly, than

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half a dozen superficially; and as it is not the object of God that you should perform a certain number of services, but that you should so enter into the spirit of them as to glorify Him, and obtain from each its full amount of benefit for others, you will frustrate God's plan by their perfunctory performance. There is nothing too small to be done thoroughly,—no work so insignificant that we can say, "It is of no consequence how I do it." This thorough spirit will prevent procrastination,—there will be no putting off till to-morrow the duty to be done, or the difficulty to be grappled with, which each day will grow more distasteful and more burdensome; it will also prevent the opposite tendency to undue haste, and the anticipation of future duty, when we ought to be absorbed in the present. Let there be also a combination of earnestness and reality so needful in all work, without which we shall walk through the vineyard as "in a vain show,"—without which our hearts will be far away in dreams, while our hands are mechanically employed.

Be wise!—Too often the usefulness of Christians is marred by a native want of wisdom. With the best intentions, they say and do just what is calculated to injure, instead of to profit, and they lay hold of the Apostolic injunction—"Be instant!" as an excuse for being very much oftener "out of season than in season." Sometimes the defect proceeds from an overweening confidence in their own wisdom,

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which makes them trust to this broken reed to extricate them from perplexities, to uphold in difficult paths, and to solve harassing doubts and fears; therefore God leaves them to these their counsellors, that after doing, saying, and thinking the most unwise things possible, they may become "fools" in their own estimation. The cure for both these cases is so simple and direct, that it need only be stated in these few words of Scripture—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." All that is essential for the obtaining of this true wisdom, is to be ever bearing in mind our daily, hourly need of it, and ever pleading the full promise of its immediate supply; so that in all sincerity though not with fleshly wisdom, we may walk without erring in the highway of holiness.—(Is. xxxv. 8.)

Be watchful!—Never is the enemy's hand so full of tare-seeds as when he sees the husbandman diligent in the field. Never does the roaring lion go hither and thither more vigilantly seeking for his prey than when the Christian's hands and heart are eagerly and successfully employed. Never does the beacon require to be fed by night, and the watch-tower to be mounted by day more unweariedly, than when the Lord's soldier is at the same time the Lord's workman. Be watchful, then, over your own soul, lest in the unguarded zeal of your occupations the fiery darts of Satan may find entrance—lest, as you

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"are busy here and there," He who must be the strength of your hand and the light of your heart departs from you, (1 Kings xx. 40,) grieved at the unwatchfulness of His servant.

Be consistent!—The Christian is not as the unrecognised architect of the coral atoll and lagoon,—or as the builder of many of earth's proudest fanes; he is identified with his work, whatever it may be, and it will suffer loss, or increase in value according as he walks steadfastly in the ways of the Lord, or is driven hither and thither, as if by a strong wind; one day at work in the vineyard, the next immersed in folly and vanity; one day speaking words of precept, the next day unspeaking them by contrary words of example. God's servant must bear the badge of his service at all times and in all places; that he may be consistent abroad, he is to be consistent at home; that his clothing without may be of wrought gold, like the king's daughter, he strives to be all glorious within. This consistency implies courage, and this courage implies decision. It is only the heart that is brave in the strength of the Lord that dares to walk boldly yet humbly, consistently yet tenderly. It is only the heart that is like a soldier's heart, that heeds not the smoke and the noise of ridicule and reproach. It is only the heart braced with decision that shrinks not from confessing its master, and that when calmly assured of the path of duty, is not careful to answer the arguments of the opposer.

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Upon the tombstone of the Scotch Reformer were written the words, "Here lies he who never feared the face of man;" and had this eulogy been unmerited, limited and unsuccessful would have been his work. When Martin Luther was implored by his friends not to answer to his citation before the Diet of Worms, he exclaimed—"I am called in the name of God to go, and I would go though I were certain to meet as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the houses." When Paul listened to the prophecies of Agabus on the one hand, and the weeping of his beloved friends on the other, it was Christian decision that prompted the glorious reply—"What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The heart that is thus enabled by grace to be bravely and decidedly consistent at all times and seasons, and under all circumstances, will find that whereas in the old days of its cowardice and hesitation it was a dwarfish and puny thing, it will now grow in stature and in strength, like the coral polypi which increase in vigour when exposed to the swell of the breakers.

Be straight-forward!—When we do even a little evil that much good may follow, we are turning aside from the straight road, and we countenance a principle which, perhaps, more than any other, has reared its Babel-like front against the simplicity of the truth that is in Jesus. Of all mottoes involving im-

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portant practical and doctrinal results we would have this inscribed over the gates of the Christian Vineyard, "Never do evil that good may come!" whether it be under the name of expediency or policy, or prudence, or Christian wisdom. Though the amount of evil be as small as a tiny acorn, it encloses the germ of a gigantic principle. The straight road is the Christian's road, wherein none can lose their way,—the winding path is but a branch of the Broad Road and beaten track. Like the "living creatures" by the Chaldean river, our feet must be "straight feet;" like them let us endeavour to go "straight forward," turning not aside as we go, but following the Spirit that goes before us. In all work this will be found a safe and simple rule. The duties that must be done clandestinely, cease to be duties. The work that is done under another badge than the Master's will never prosper. The truths that must be rendered palatable by worldly policy will lose their truthfulness, and fail of their effect.

Be patient!—God looks not upon the success, but upon the unwearied arm, the patient heart. The very toiling and rowing in contrary winds, though the rowers apparently do not near the land, is pleasing to Him. The casting the nets into the sea during the long weary night, though finding nothing, is service to the gracious Master. Be patient, therefore, like the husbandman who waits long for the precious seed; it may be that you are

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taken away before the early and latter rain, so that you never see the young stem, the green sheaths, the yellow grain ; but in planting the crop you have worked your appointed work. The great object in Christ's vineyard is not to see by sight, but to sow and water by faith. If you measure your work by the work of others, you will grow impatient, they seem to do so much more, and to succeed so much better ; but God has given you one kind of work, and one kind of discipline in that work,—to them He has given another, and it belongs not to you to judge which is the more useful, which the more successful. If you are too anxious that the fruit of your work should look well to the world's eye, you will grow impatient speedily ; but remember, that the outside may be fair, and the inside bitter dust, like the apples of the doomed city.—Be patient, then, for the ripening of the good fruit of the good tree ;—there will be a time when it will appear green and hard to those who look on it in ignorance ; but keep it ever nearer to the Sun of righteousness, and soon its beauty will be rich and ripe.

Be spiritually minded!—Never let work of any kind interfere with the times and seasons of devotion, or with the habit of spiritual communion with Him, who is the Father and the Friend, as well as "the great Work-Master." If we neglect to sit at the feet of Jesus, we shall grow careful and troubled about many things,—about the table,—the farm,—

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the merchandise,—about the work that is highest, as well as the work that is lowest; we shall be selling doves in the temple, which, however pure and innocent, must be cast out. If we are to go forth in the Spirit into the outer walks of life, His influence pervading the works of our hands, He must dwell within the temple of our hearts by faith,—He must give us clear and spiritual views of the things that are eternal, that we may place in their right position the things that are temporal.

In concluding these homely hints, we must note some pitfalls in the Lord's vineyard, because of which the deceitful hearts of the vine-dressers may halt and stumble. You may make an idol of your work, dear friend. If you are over-anxious for success,—elated by it when it comes,—desponding when it is withheld; if you refuse to believe that others will rise up in your room, as well or better fitted to carry on the work; if your soul cleaves to it till you are unwilling to hear the summons to your home, to your rest;—then there is reason to fear that you are worshipping the work of your own hands, "bowing down to your own net, and sacrificing to your own drag."*

On the other side, you may be weary,—weary of the labour,—weary of the struggle,—weary of the long slumbering of the seed within the earth; and,

* "To our own nets, ne'er bow we down,
Lest on the eternal shore,
The Angels, while our draughts they own,
Reject us evermore."—KEBLE. Hab. i. 16.

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like the prophet under the juniper tree, (1 Kings xix. 4-8,) you may be ready to say, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life;" but he replies, "Not so; arise, and eat; the journey is long, and the burden is heavy, and the labour is great; but strengthen and refresh thyself in the Lord, and be not weary of well-doing." "Are you not wearying for our heavenly rest?" said Whitefield one day to an old clergyman. "No; certainly not," he replied. "Why not?" was the surprised rejoinder. "Why, my good friend," said the old minister, "if you were to send your servant into the fields to do a certain portion of work for you, and promised to give him rest and refreshment in the evening, what would you say if you found him languid and discontented in the middle of the day, and murmuring, 'Would God it were evening!' would you not bid him be up and doing, and finish his work, and then go home and get the promised rest? Just so does God say to you and me."

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XIV.

REWARD OF WORK.

"Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded."—2 CHRON. XV. 7.

"Thy works and alms, and all thy good endeavours,
Staid not behind, nor in the grave were trod:
But as Faith pointed with her golden rod,
Followed thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on, and Faith, who knew them best,
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple beams,
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee on glorious themes
Before the Judge; who thenceforth bid thee rest,
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams."

MILTON'S SONNETS.

CONSCIOUS as we are of having owed a vast debt which we cannot pay; conscious of having been forgiven that debt fully and freely, the idea of reward for the sin-stained services of the poor debtor, is at first intensely painful, and seems to introduce a lower motive and an unworthy element into our work. Yet we have no right to turn away from a truth so clearly revealed in Scripture. Like all parts of Jehovah's Gospel plan, it is composed of interwoven wisdom and love; for the doctrine of reward of work, when fully understood, only lays the forgiven and the rewarded soul more humbled and more adoring at the feet of his Master. The acceptance of our

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poor broken services so stained by wrong motives, by ignorance and by faithlessness, seems wonderful condescension; but to reward them is like returning good for evil, thus heaping coals of fire on our heads. "Fourscore years," said Polycarp, "have I served God, and found Him a good master;" and this will be the experience of all the Lord's people, who, while often neglecting what they can do, are, even when they have done all, unprofitable servants. God often rewards in this life, by large measures of success—the reaping time will surely come, though it may seem to tarry, and the precious seed sown in tears, will in all certainty be changed into golden sheaves. Frequently He rewards by a fulness of blessing, returned upon the worker's own soul. The heart that is drawn out to the hungry and the afflicted, will be guided and satisfied by the Lord Himself. He that cultivates all social and relative love for the sake of Jesus, will be more and more transformed into His divine and loving image. He that has led a soul to the Truth will know it more convincingly in his own soul. Those who have given their youth to the service of God, will be like the green cedars, for long life and strength, and like the palm tree, that yields clusters of fruit in its old age. But it is not only such rewards that the believer is promised in the Word of God. For all, houses, lands, children, parents, wives, brethren, forsaken for His name's sake, there shall be an hundredfold in the

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everlasting kingdom. For all grief and warfare, there shall be a double of rest and blessedness. For the many souls won to righteousness, there will be crowns of rejoicing, and a radiance like the stars of the firmament. For the food to the hungry,—for the drink to the thirsty,—for the clothes to the naked,—for the consolation to the captive,—for the cup of cold water to the disciple as given to the King himself, there will be an additional joy on the right hand thrones. Even as one star differeth from another star in glory, so will those whose works are as gold and silver, upon the true foundation, differ in brightness and enlargement from those whose "wood, hay, and stubble," must be burnt, though they themselves "are saved as by fire." Oh! how the thought of this stupendous love will prostrate each redeemed one before the rainbow throne! How gratefully the crowns will be cast at the Saviour's feet! How rejoicingly the voices will mingle in the new and adoring song!

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XV.

FUTURE WORK.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—MATT. xxv. 23.

"And his servants shall serve him and see his face."—REV. xxii. 3, 4.

"Thy Master calls thee, good and faithful servant;
Long hast thou served on earth with spirit fervent.
Go hence to yonder temple filled with glory,
There shalt thou praise thy Lord in song and story;
There shalt thou see his face instinct with beauty,
There shalt thou serve with all delightsome duty."

IT has been beautifully but untruly said, that

"All we know of saints above
Is that they sing and that they love."

We know more than this. Though the river is wide, we can see in clear weather something of the scenery on the other side; though the veil is thick, we can catch glimpses of what is passing behind it; though the voices and the music are too distant to be distinctly heard by mortal ears, yet some words, some harmonies, come faintly to us when the Bible opens the door of those glorious but invisible dwellings. We know that the servants of the Master are to serve him and see his face,—we know that it is to be an active service, for they are to serve him resting

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not, day and night, in his temple,—we know that they are to judge, and to rule, and to have power over the nations. We know not, indeed, what manner of service that of the servitors in the upper temple is to be; whether, like the angels, they are to be ministers to the heirs of salvation in other worlds,—whether they are to be watchers and warners of the tempted, the sinning, and the penitent,—whether they are to fly swiftly, bearing the Lord's messages, and rejoicing with those who do rejoice. Into the realms of conjecture we dare not venture; but this we may know, as surely as if we had been caught up into the heavens to see with our own bodily eyes, that among the prepared things of the prepared home, for the prepared people, there will be blessed and congenial service appointed for each, for which all that has gone before of waiting, and longing, and struggling, and working, has been but the preparation,—a service combining indeed, the joyfulness of praise, and the sweetness of rest, but in its very nature possessing the active, useful, and progressive elements of WORK. "Surely the idea is inadmissible that an instrument wrought up at so much expense to a polished fitness for service, is destined to be suspended for ever on the palace walls of heaven, as a glittering bauble no more to make proof of its temper."* Trained in a school, purified in a furnace, loved with a love which the seraphim and cherubim have never known and

* Isaac Taylor's "Natural History of Enthusiasm."

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never needed; instinct with yearnings and strivings after the high, the beautiful, and the immortal, we cannot doubt that the service of the Lord's redeemed, accompanied as it is to be with the sight of that blessed countenance, the veiling of which is the believer's greatest sorrow upon earth, will be yet higher and nobler than the services of the happy and glorious, but unfallen and unpurchased angels.

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XVI.

CONCLUSION.

"Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."—2 CHRON. xii. 8.

. . . . "Christian works are no more than
Animate love and faith, as flowers are the animate spring-tide.
Works do follow us all unto God: these stand and bear witness,
Not what they *seemed*,—but what they *were* only."
THE CHILDREN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

IN our progress through this little volume, we have taken it for granted that those who have accompanied us in quest of a few useful hints belong decidedly to the number of those who rejoice in the title of "servants." It is not impossible, however, that these pages may fall into the hands of some who may find the words, duty—work—service, hard and distasteful. There is a sentimental school in the present day, that would fain abolish all these ungraceful words, as they are deemed, and substitute some that are beautiful when joined to the others, but vain and vacant when left to stand by themselves. We hear much of the principle of "love," which is to supplant duty, instead of supporting and adorning it. We have Jehovah revealed to us not as the *personal*

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Master, Father, and Saviour, but as God in everything, and everything as God—the works of His hands transformed into Himself. We have genius, with all its eccentricities and weaknesses, turned into a faith and a worship. We have "earnestness" much lauded and much recommended—not earnestness in truth, but earnestness often in spite of truth; error taken no account of, as long as men are "earnest" in maintaining it. We have æsthetic beauty reared upon an idol's shrine, and all that is "useful" branded, not only as devoid of beauty and elevation, but as debasing to the free and aspiring soul of man. It is little to be wondered at, that men, wrapt in a visionary existence of beauty and perfection, should look with contempt on those who so openly avow themselves to be "servants." What beauty—what merit—what spontaneous grace—what earnest dedication can there be in this menial work? Yet there was one instance of the most devoted love—the most earnest self-sacrifice—the most heroic beauty that the world ever saw, and the prime feature of wonder and praise in that blessed example was, that He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant. Since those marvellous days in the elder time, the act of SERVICE has been ennobled and consecrated. The doing the will of a master, the "ministering," instead of being ministered unto, has become work of which neither man nor the spirits that are hovering around us, need to be ashamed.

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In fact, whether recognised or not, service is the universal law. Ay, and though it sound not fit for ears sentimental and polite, we know that those who serve not God, are the servants, nay, the slaves of a hard task-master. Various and plausible are the forms of his unsatisfying—and if the chains be not broken—his eternal servitude. Some are slaves of the fancy—some are slaves of society—some are slaves of the flesh—some are slaves of the mind; and the fetters are not the less ignoble because unconsciously worn—the tasks not less menial because they are suited to the grovelling tastes of the servants—the work is not less essentially laborious, because it is of no avail: "The people labouring in the very fire for very vanity."—Hab. ii. 13. Thus we have a learned and industrious man, of other times, crying out upon his deathbed—"Alas! I have squandered away my life laboriously in doing nothing."*

There is as great a difference in the two services, and the two rewards, as in the two masters. There is as great a difference between the apparent and the real beauty of the work here, as there will be between the beauty and the misery of the two states in eternity. We grant that the beauty of the senses, and the beauty of the feelings, and the beauty of the intellect, and the work to which they lead, surpass infinitely in external graciousness the every-day duty—the heavy cross—the weeping eyes—the

* The learned Grotius. See "The Christian World Unmasked," p. 71.

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weary feet and toiling hands of those who follow Him who was like a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness. But the beauty of the one passes away, and where is it, and what remains? The struggles and the scars pass away also, and are no more seen for ever; but there remain on earth the beauty and the grace of good deeds, long after their doers have perished,—like the ancient glass, which, destitute of beauty and colour in its youth, shines forth in the decay of its original substance, resplendent in gorgeous hues. Nor is this all; those who have borne the image of the earthly in so much weariness and infirmity, shall also bear the image of the heavenly—those who have been scorned for the lowliness of their work, shall reign as kings and priests, crowned with diadems of immortal beauty.

So far as we have yet gone, we have contemplated the working believer *as an individual*, in some of his phases of duty towards God, towards himself, and towards his neighbour. There is one aspect of his position, however, which we cannot overlook, luminous as it is with love and beauty. The believer is not only a part of Christ,—he is a part of Christ's Church. We hear much of "The Church" in the present day,—too much, and yet not enough. We hear of it as connected with the priesthood,—one saying, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos." We hear of it as connected with the walls and the screens,—the organs and the surplices.

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We hear of it as connected with sharp contentions and unbrotherly divisions, but we hear little of it as the spiritual body of Christ,—as the great company of the redeemed, both in earth and in heaven. And so it comes to pass, that among infidels, the word is a scorn and a scoff, and among believers it is used shrinkingly, and approved doubtingly. Let us not, however, allow the blessed and beautiful title to be monopolized by those who know not its true beauty and value. The Church is not composed of quarrelsome children, who must have all things their own way, and no other, as might often be imagined,—neither is it composed of self-complacent architects of their own barriers, and forgers of their own bolts and bars, but of tried and tempted, repenting and pardoned men and women, who have duties to perform for each other, and for God, *as members of a spiritual church.* Nor is a forced union in external form needful to the proper division and success of this work. It is *not* needful,—it is *not* the essence of strength, it is, or would be, the essence of very weakness; for, as it has been well said, "An intolerant sect, is a sect in fear."* Christ did not die to give His people strength and safety by means of uniformity,—He died to give them the strength of unity,—unity with Him,—unity with each other,—unity in their great work. God who knows all the intricacies and needs, and varied constitutions of man's spirit,

* Isaac Taylor's "Spiritual Christianity."

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far better than man knows them himself, has not instituted in His Word one form of worship, with secular penalties to guard, and persecution to punish. He has clearly set forth the doctrines to be taught in all Churches,—the blood of the Cross,—the regeneration of the Holy Ghost,—the adoption into the Father's family,—the grateful services to be rendered because of these great benefits, and He has left His children free to worship Him in all non-essentials, according to their individual characters and necessities, and their varied views of scriptural obligation,—giving His Son to save and His Spirit to sanctify, and His will to be done in and by all Churches,—a blessed fact to which the great company before the throne are at this moment bearing joyful testimony. Besides the individual obligations and responsibility which lie upon each labourer in the Lord's vineyard, he has therefore another equally important charge to keep as a member of the Congregation of the Faithful. He has to do with each and all, as they belong or do not belong to the true Church. If as far as man's judgment is of avail in "trying the spirits," he can decide that those who are within the range of his influence, are spiritual "Churchmen," in deed and in truth, then are they to be cheered, to be cherished, to be visited, even as in so doing, "Ye do it unto ME." If, on the contrary, it appears as if their names were yet wanting to the records of the Church, then is all social, domestic, prayerful, and special work to be exercised,

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that these souls may be brought within the spiritual pale.

No circumstances can interfere with this *ecclesiastical responsibility*. It may be,—to use Mr. Ruskin's* beautiful simile,—that the Christian may take some of the sheep of the fold for stones on the far mountain side, but let him draw nearer to them, and he will soon see the true sheeplike form and demeanour. It may be that those whom he believes to be his brethren, may turn away and say, "Stand by; I belong to a church that is holier than thine," and the natural heart may retort and say, "I am more liberal than thou, and I can hold no communion with a bigot." Dream not, O believer, that thou art thus loosed from thy responsibilities; thy work in watching and convincing that erring but sincere heart, is but laid before thee the clearer.

The present day, with its past warnings and its future perils, is not wanting in special and startling arguments for the urgency of work, and the necessity of warfare. When the spiritual and CATHOLIC CHURCH (we shrink not from the name) is threatened with foes without, and traitors within, and injudicious friends around and about, it is time that she should be seen as an illuminated city set on an hill,—that she should be known as a Church engaged in full work—work of all kinds and all degrees, but more especially in the urgent one of plucking souls from the burning,

* Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds.

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so much the more as she sees the day approaching. When the signs of the times seem to give forth audible utterances—when it is possible that the fire for the martyr, as well as the dungeon and galley for the confessor, may be near at hand, it is well that the Church should carefully foster and seek to maintain, in all hearts bound up within her, the courage of the martyr, and the faith of the confessor. If there never has been a day, however, of such startling calls, and such glorious opportunity, there never has been one of such glaring obstacle. Satan, knowing that his time is short, is putting forth all his energies "in great wrath;" he has sown dragon's teeth in the vineyard, and thrown shells of fire into the camp.

Let us glance for a moment at the scene around us. Life is a bivouac*—the world a broad plain of strife, and there is a day approaching, even the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Slowly but surely the hosts of the foe are mustering. You may see the broad flag of Rome, and the less conspicuous ensign of Anglo-Catholicism, and the black banner of infidelity, and the puny pennons of false prophets and false Christs. But where are the opposing legions? where is the phalanx of the Lord's people? Alas, there is a division in the camp; brother will not march forward with brother; their eyes are

* "On the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,
Be ye heroes in the strife!"—LONGFELLOW.

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fixed, *not* upon the God above them, *not* upon the foe before them, but upon the colours of the ensigns, upon the forms of the pennons around them! What, then, is to be done? Let all who are upon the Lord's side unite their forces,—let the flag of each wave bravely and broadly above them,—let their own churches and altars become daily more precious to their hearts, even as the child loves its father's birth-place, its mother's home;—only let each heart have love and sympathy for its fellow-heart,—let each brother prize his brother's worship, though it is not his own,—let the tables of communion be as free to those who shew themselves to be God's people, as the wells of water and green palm-trees in God's wilderness,—let the prayer be special and earnest, faithful and unwearied, for an outpouring of the Lord's Spirit, as a spirit of Catholic love and unity,—let each man, and woman, and child, add their weight and their influence, though it be but as the grain of sand, as the widow's mite, against the iniquity of sectarianism—*then* shall we go forth a united company from every tongue, and people, and kindred, and nation,—a victorious band of brothers, with our elder Brother at the head,—the Captain of the Lord's host!

We need not wonder that schemes of this kind are so often pronounced Utopian, and so often fail, as they certainly do, when we remember the unbelief that prevails upon the subject—few believing that,

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though difficult, it is *not* impossible, for "all things are possible with God," and "we can do *all* things through Christ strengthening us,"—very few hopefully and earnestly praying to God to do this thing for us that we cannot do for ourselves, and still fewer realizing such a spiritual unity as the very best and the very highest. For we maintain that a unity of spirit between two of different Churches is far more honouring to God, and far more convincing to the world, than the same degree of unity between two of the same Church. The latter *may* be the result of fear, or policy, or self-interest, or brick and mortar combination; the former is a free, wide, noble, rejoicing sympathy, shewing to the world whence it came, and whom it imitates, looking up and away from the little things that are below to the great things that are above,—loving because Christ loves, pardoning because Christ has pardoned, the one and the other,—sitting beside each other on earth, because they are to sit together in heaven,—working hand to hand and heart to heart, because they expect the same summons to the marriage supper of the Glorious Lamb.

We conclude this little volume with the following striking quotation:—

"My particular calling being a peculiar and distinct station, wherein I am bound to be serviceable to my country and family, and wherein also I have this privilege, that I may further my general calling, if I

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mind it out of conscience to the Lord, or in obedience to His Word; I wish, in general, that I may never cross the wise providence of my God (in the government of the world) by neglecting it or thinking lightly of it, but since I am listed under the Captain of my salvation, may serve Him faithfully, not only in general as a soldier, but also in that place or office to which He hath chosen and called me. I wish, in particular, that 'what my hand findeth to do, I may do it with all my might;' that I may be of the number of them that spend themselves with labour, and not of them who waste with rust and laziness; my diligence herein is some help against the temptations of the devil. The sluggard's heart is like his field, overgrown with weeds. Lord, let me rather wear out with work than consume (like a garment laid by with moths) for want of use! . . . . I desire that I may be so sensible that good things here below come from the Most High God, and the success of my labours dependeth more on His providence than my diligence, that I may never in a morning open my shop, or lift up a tool, (as my trade is,) before I have opened my heart and lifted up my soul to my God for His blessing upon my endeavours. All creatures in the hands of my God are as dead tools in the hands of a living workman, by whose force and influence alone they act. . . . . In a word, I wish that I may, like the wise merchant, sell all I have to buy the pearl of great price; the gold tried

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in the fire, that I may be rich; the white raiment, that I may be clothed, and drive such a constant trade with my God in the other world—hearing from thence, and sending thither—that when the King of Terrors shall give me a writ of ease from my particular calling, I may die in the Lord, rest from my labours, and have my works following me, 'through free grace, into an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' AMEN."—*Swinnock's Christian Man's Calling.* A.D. 1662.

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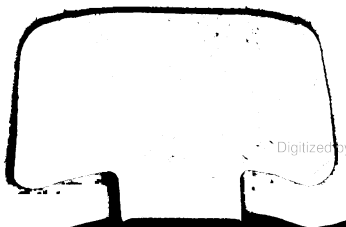
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